Quantitative or Qualitative? Choosing the Best Fit Method for Gaining New Insight about What Matters to Residents in Nursing Homes

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A quantitative method derived from the Relationship Theory (Winnicott, 1970) measuring variables of empathy, consistency, and reliability was initially considered for this study. However, further inquiry about meaning-making for residents in nursing homes led to methodological questions:

- What if empathy, reliability, and consistency were not reflective what mattered most to residents?
- What if residents experienced quality of care as something different than empathy, reliability, or consistency?

The decision to use a qualitative research design emerged during the research process.

The qualitative description method is an iterative process using low-inference interpretation.

Theoretical Frameworks
The Theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness (Newman, 1994) and the Person Centered Care Theory (McCormack & McCrane, 2010) provided guidance for developing a participant–researcher relationship and interview questions that promoted validity for this study. Expanding consciousness represents health when persons achieve person–environment interaction. The concept of presence in both theories provided guidance in understanding partnerships between residents and nurses.

Findings
Although empathy, consistency, and reliability surfaced in the data findings, residents’ descriptions of additional aspects divulged a powerful message: Positive and negative things that mattered to residents influenced their well-being while living in the nursing homes. Four meaningful clusters of data emerged from the interviews:

Accepting life in the nursing home
Enduring loss
Relishing good care
Getting by

References: