

TRANSFORMING DEMENTIA SERVICE DELIVERY: THE MENTAL HEALTH GERO-CHAMPIONS PROGRAM

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In order to provide effective mental health care to older adults with major neurocognitive disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's disease and related dementias) within outpatient mental health clinics, mental health practitioners must possess a basic understanding of these disorders, the needs of and challenges faced by people living with dementia and their families, and effective treatment approaches for this population. The Mental Health Gero-Champions Program was established in 2015 at a large Veterans Affairs medical center with the aim of providing clinical support and opportunities for training to multidisciplinary mental health providers to enhance skills in assessing and treating older adults with neurocognitive disorders. This presentation will provide an overview of the Mental Health Gero-Champions Program, describe the development and implementation of this program, and discuss challenges and successes in sustaining this transformative initiative over time.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING A NEW DEMENTIA BEHAVIORAL CARE APPROACH IN NURSING HOMES

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The STAR-VA training program in Veterans Health Administration Community Living Centers (CLCs) has been helping interdisciplinary care teams understand and manage dementia-related behaviors in the nursing home setting, with promising clinical outcomes. However, sustaining a new care approach in a health care system poses multiple challenges. This presentation will discuss facilitators and barriers to STAR-VA sustainability based on CLC team and nurse leader feedback. Findings are informing development of a new site coaching program and a sustainability toolkit. Feedback to date suggests that critical STAR-VA implementation and sustainability strategies include: regularly scheduled team meetings to discuss behavioral assessment and care plans; ongoing staff training (e.g., new staff orientation); communicating care plans across shifts and in the health record; multiple nurse/shift champions; impromptu huddles; acknowledging staff successes; leadership engagement. The coaching program engages teams in setting and tracking site sustainability goals. Lessons learned will be discussed.

DEMENTIA-FOCUSED PERSON-DIRECTED CARE TRAINING IN THE NURSING HOME: FIDELITY AND OUTCOMES

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To address the behavioral health of nursing home (NH) residents living with dementia, training direct care staff (DCS) is essential, for the well-being of both residents and staff. We evaluated a training for DCS focused on providing care for persons with advanced dementia who are at-risk of not having care needs met, largely due to communication deficits. Staff were trained in promoting comfort and reducing distress through person-directed care (PDC), deeply knowing each resident, and anticipating needs. Subsequent fidelity interviews with staff showed a higher number of PDC practices utilized by staff in the intervention communities compared to usual care. We also compared the impact of the PDC model versus a traditional model of NH care on resident clinical outcomes, finding a significant interaction where those in the intervention group had fewer clinical symptoms over a 6-month period. Implications for training in the NH setting will be discussed.

SESSION 2020 (SYMPOSIUM)

INTEREST GROUP SESSION—SYSTEMS RESEARCH IN LONG TERM CARE: DEVELOPING AN EVIDENCE BASE FOR NURSING HOME STAFFING IN EUROPE AND BEYOND: MANY PATHS TO ONE GOAL?

Chair: Jan Hamers, *Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands*

Co-Chair: Ramona Backhaus, *Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands*

Discussant: Kirsten Corazzini, *Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, United States*

Despite heterogeneity across countries, nursing homes worldwide have to ensure the delivery of high quality care. At the same time, adequately staffing the homes remains a major concern in most countries. It is a significant challenge to determine the numbers and type of staff as well as staff's competencies that are necessary to meet the complex needs of nursing home residents. While, especially in the US, research on the relationship between staffing and quality in nursing homes has received considerable attention, the research literature is contradictory. Evidence shows that employing more staff or more registered nurses instead of nurse assistants will not automatically lead to better nursing home quality. This inconsistency of evidence might be explained by a myriad of methodological and theoretical challenges. This symposium aims to provide an international perspective on how researchers from different European countries contribute to the development of an evidence base for nursing home staffing. The first presenter will draw on findings from a realist review conducted in the UK, focusing on the mechanisms (how, why and in what circumstances) under which staff influence care home quality. The second presenter will offer insights into a Swiss study, taking a broader perspective on measuring staffing and quality in nursing homes. The third presenter will present a new instrument to identify staffing ratios in German nursing homes and provide insight into its development process. The fourth presenter will discuss the results of a critical review on the evidence base of a Dutch nursing home staffing guideline.