



Prejudices and taboos in long term care

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International Day of Older Persons

TABOOS AND PREJUDICES IN LONG-TERM CARE

Why this subject?



- 2019: EAN GA in Matera, Italy: survey about taboos and dogmas to identify what dogmas and taboos were dominant from the perspective of a care provider
- Ageism: discrimination based on old age and the ageing process
- Sense that ageism is stuck in general views but needs to have more concrete content
- Working group assigned by the EAN Board: 8 experts from 5 European countries

Our journey

- Input from EAN members was framed: dogmas and taboos
- Changed dogma in prejudice because a dogma is a belief that is held unquestioned.
- Blended meetings:
 - Passionate and emotional discussions fuelled by own real life experiences in elderly care
 - Rational reasoning underpinned by literature
- Challenged each other by opposing in pairs on everyone's contribution

Taboos and prejudices

- A prejudice is *“a feeling, favourable or unfavourable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience”* (Allport, 1979)
- A taboo is *“a subject, word or action that is avoided or forbidden for religious or social reasons”* (Cambridge Dictionary)
- The report contains 14 prejudices and 4 taboos

Prejudice: Elder abuse



What are forms of elder abuse? (WHO, 2011)

- Physical abuse: physical and sexual violence.
- Mental abuse: emotional, neglect
- Financial/material exploitation
- Abandonment

But:

- Difficult to detect: when do we call it abuse?

Findings WG

- Prevalence of elder abuse in Europe (Yon, Lam, Panssmore, Huber, Sethi, 2020):
 - 15.4% of older adults at home
 - 33% of older adults in an institutional setting!!
- Perpetrators:
 - Home setting: partners/family members, professional caregivers
 - Institutional setting: professional caregivers
- Older people with dementia or a disability increases risk (Osterbrink/Andratsch, 2015)

Conclusions and recommendations WG

- A large part of the elder abuse at home as well in elderly care facilities remains undetected
- Already numerous national efforts like emergency/complaints telephone numbers, crisis counselling, ombudspersons
- But awareness needs to be raised

Therefore:

- Early detection is key in home and facilities
- Management in home care and facilities have to lead the staff
- Staff training to recognise signs of elder abuse
- Recognition and support of overburdened family caregivers

Example raising (public) awareness: clips on Netherlands TV



Netherlands policy

Prevention:

- Raising public awareness: clips, posters and folders

Early detection:

- Lowering barriers to report abuse: website to report or telephone (anonymously)
- Legislation : Report code: mandatory report of health and social care organisations when abuse is detected
- When criminal elements are present in the abuse e.g. robbery of older people by care worker, prosecution is initiated.

Taboo: Sexuality in old age



Taboo: sexuality in old age

Some interesting findings:

- Social legitimacy of sexuality in later life: taboo of sexual visibility related to youthfulness and beauty
- Ageing process affects sexuality
- Narrow definition of sexuality: intercourse and penetrative sex rather than intimacy
- No equality between LGBTQ+ and heterosexuals: discrimination by residents and staff

Conclusions and recommendations

- Little or no understanding of sexual needs of older people by staff
- Discomfort to talk about “it” and address issues by residents and staff
- As a consequence there is no attention for sexual privacy
- Resistance against LGBTQ+ older people driven by culture and religion

Therefore:

- Comply with human rights about sexuality
- Assess sexual needs as part of intake
- Zero tolerance on bullying because of sexual preferences by residents and staff
- Education of residents and training of staff about sexual needs and expression

Next steps

- Discussion of report at the associations/EAN membership and their professionals and with (local governments)
- Implementation of recommendations in collaboration with (local) governments
- Monitoring of implementation by EAN/ECREAS

A pair of hands holds a white rectangular sign against a light blue background. The sign features the text 'THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION' in a dark red, serif, all-caps font. The hands are positioned on the left and right sides of the sign, with the left hand holding the top edge and the right hand holding the bottom edge. The background is a solid light blue color.

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

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