



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



Informal Continuing Education: A Reflection Inspired by Gerontological Practices.

REFERENCE

Beaulieu, M. (2004). Informal Continuing Education: A Reflection Inspired by Gerontological Practices. *Interactions*, 8(2), 45-55.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Research note

Content: Reflection

DISCUSSED THEMES

Training, the impact of professional actions on the personal life of practitioners, representations of old age, cognitive losses, declining physical health, advocacy.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This article proposes a reflection on informal training, more precisely on the knowledge produced by the experiences of the practitioners in the psychosocial field who work with an elderly clientele.

PROBLEM

Knowledge in gerontology is derived primarily from professional practice as well as from training, whether formal or informal. Moreover, in the absence of policy on abuse and neglect inflicted on seniors, workers must rely on their clinical judgment, experience and relevant expertise in the matter.

METHODOLOGY

This reflection is based on the results of a study conducted with sixteen psychosocial workers in the public and community sectors, carried out through semi-structured interviews, in order to find out about the issues and the dilemmas of practical intervention in situations of elder abuse. At the end of interview, the participants had to answer the question "To conclude, how do you envision your own aging?". The purpose of this question was to initiate their reflection on the issue with a more personal perspective. Of the responses obtained, four major themes emerged and were the basis for the analysis carried out by the author, namely representations of aging, cognitive losses, declining physical health and the importance given to remaining socially active.

RESULTS

Practitioners can be bearers of negative representations of old age, but also of an openness and curiosity about the benefits of aging. Their practice with seniors increases their apprehensions about cognitive losses. Some react by making changes in their lifestyle to prevent such deterioration of cognitive functions. In addition, practitioners working with elderly clients are in a position to prepare more adequately to face their own aging, including by finding solutions to face a possible physical decline. Finally, these practitioners stressed the importance of speaking out, of making their rights known and of expressing their views.

DISCUSSION

The work of these practitioners leads them to a reflection about their own future and that of their families, but also about their interventions. Reflection on practice ensures that practitioners feel more competent and effective in their work with older adults, but also more knowledgeable about aging. They are not, however, less worried by unfortunate life events associated with aging. Recognizing the risks inherent to their lifestyle, however, they can make an informed decision about changes they want and can make.

CONCLUSION

In sum, even if intervention with an elderly clientele does not always result in an optimistic outlook on aging, it still shows positive aspects. Indeed, those who work with seniors are better prepared than others to the changes associated with physical decline. They are well placed to act as agents of change and advocates, both for the respect of seniors' rights and for practices that are based on respect for these people.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The practitioners have expressed a need for training, whether formal or informal. This training may consist, in particular, of individual reflections, of discussions on the impact of professional experience on personal life, etc.

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