



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles

“Aging ... in Complete Freedom”: Synthesis and Reflection.

REFERENCE

Beaulieu, M., & Vandal, A. (1990). “Aging ... in Complete Freedom”: Synthesis and Reflection. *Le Gérontophile Journal*, 12(3), 7-12.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article
Content: Report analysis

DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, form of mistreatment at home, form of mistreatment in nursing home, factors of risk and vulnerability, perpetrators of mistreatment, barriers to denunciation, law, prevention, screening, intervention, organization of services, senior groups, training, natural networks and public policy.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to better consolidate social policies regarding seniors, this article first briefly introduces the essence of the government report *Aging...freely* (1989) and then does a critical analysis and concludes by a broader reflection on the current context of the intervention and solutions to consider.

PROBLEM

In May 1987, under the lead of the Ministry of Health and Social Services of Quebec, a committee was created to report on the situation regarding mistreatment of older adults. In 1989, the committee published its report *Aging...freely* that gives an overview of the situation of seniors in the community, just as those living in nursing homes. “*Plaidoyer-Victimes*” has subsequently established an ad hoc committee which produced a first critical analysis of the report.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative content analysis was performed with an evaluation grid with seven variables: clarity, specificity, innovative aspect, human and materials resources, policy guidelines regarding older adults, identified actors and the response to biological, psychological and social needs of older adults.

RESULTS

The report generally outlines well the situation of mistreatment. However, there is a lack of clarification with respect to the desired changes at the political level and also with government action plan. In addition, it does not question the fact that the service network is oriented above all on the medical aspect. Several additions are also made to the ideas contained in the report: clarifying mistreatment elements to be added in the individualized service plan, special attention to be given to screening, developing respite measures at the community level, establishing a code of ethics in all agencies providing services to seniors, forming beneficiary committees in various services and ensuring their collaboration, providing concrete ways to raise awareness of discrimination against seniors and improving intergenerational relations.

DISCUSSION

The “*Plaidoyer-Victimes*” ad hoc committee has put forward 21 aspects which would have been interesting to find in the report *Ageing ... freely*. Three of these ideas are taken up in the article. First, the decision to choose a nursing home belongs to the senior person and her/his family. Then, the emphasis is put on the seniors’ freedom of choice concerning their lifestyle. Finally, the focus is placed on the fact that the percentage of seniors in the community or in nursing homes remains low and it is therefore not enough to improve services already provided, but rather to educate seniors about mistreatment.

CONCLUSION

The report presents an original analysis from a global perspective. In order to achieve a form of consensus and to exercise a real influence on the policy direction, the practitioners should position themselves in relation to the content of this report. The authors feel that it is also important to prioritize the screening before putting the emphasis on the protocols of intervention regarding the problem of mistreatment. The legislation should not be restricted around the problems of mistreatment, but should encompass all aspects of aging, while remaining balanced between the need of protection and respect for human rights as well as between collective and individual needs.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Community groups could develop projects for health screenings and provide training to volunteers. Groups defending human rights should regroup to defend the rights of older adults who are victims of mistreatment. HLMs (low income housing), regional and provincial agencies and beneficiary committees of nursing homes would do well in collaborating in the production of concerted action plans. As caregivers, they should have access to more support and training in addition to be actively integrated in the contingency plans. In CLSCs (local community services and health centers), it requires the training of all staff regarding mistreatment and to make sure that screening is carried out in the initial evaluation of the client. As for nursing homes, the decision-making power of seniors must be respected as well as to foster the involvement of the family. It is also essential to prevent burnout by setting up measures to this effect. Finally, the intervention tools should be developed to allow a more effective intervention in mistreatment situations.

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