



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



The Ethics Applied to the Field of Human Aging Concerning Intervention Practices to Counter Mistreatment in Long Term Care Institutions.

REFERENCE

Beaulieu, M. (1995). The Ethics Applied to the Field of Human Aging Concerning Intervention Practices to Counter Mistreatment in Long Term Care Institutions. *Ethica*, 7(1), 31-48.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Empirical

DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, extent of the phenomenon, forms of abuse, risk factors, factors of vulnerability, gender concept, profile of the person abused, barriers to denunciation, law, prevention, screening, intervention, burden and stress.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This article introduces a discussion on common intervention practices in institution regarding abused seniors as well as the perpetrator of mistreatment. It describes the major ethical issues related to these interventions. The discussion is based on a qualitative study conducted with managers of the Corporation of nursing homes in Laval in order to know their definition of mistreatment and the meaning they give to their response to this problem.

PROBLEM

In Quebec, it is estimated that 10 to 12% of seniors are going to live their last days in institutions. The current system encourages seniors to stay at home as long as possible and the ones ending up in institutions are therefore in great loss of autonomy and greatly disadvantaged. Within these residential environments, it is noted that some of these seniors are abused, not by relatives, but by social stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

The study that supports this discussion was conducted with several managers of the Corporation of nursing homes in Laval who were chosen to represent services offered to seniors as a whole and aimed at gauging their definition of mistreatment and their response to it. Particular attention is given to the social meanings of their intervention practice.

RESULTS

Managers are now more aware of the different forms of abuse. They define abuse as either an individual or institutional responsibility. This double definition brings an ethical reflection concerning duties and responsibilities of practitioners, but also institutions. As for the level of intervention, professionals seem to concentrate their efforts on abuse in terms of individual responsibility. Prevention is the most developed form of intervention and the screening appears to be rather difficult, because the most serious forms of abuse are often hidden. The direct intervention occurs in different forms and takes into account the seriousness of the action and the employee's record. The intervention regarding elder abuse is in full development and efforts are being made to find out what are the most acceptable practices. It is however noted that there is not much room for seniors in this process. Communication is also an essential element of the intervention in elder abuse: the person delivering the message must be heard and the person receiving it must be listening.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is included in the results shown above.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the meaning given by the participants to their practices is constantly evolving according to new situations they are facing. The reflection must be continued on the ethical issues caused by the intervention in a situation of elder abuse.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The author first proposes a debate concerning the establishment of an intervention protocol in situations of elder abuse. Additional thoughts about the victims' status during intervention are also suggested by the author. Finally, she proposes to take advantage of the fact that all institutions are called upon to adopt a code of ethics in order to include elements related to elder abuse.

DRAFTING DATE

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