

“The needs of vulnerable older people in home health care”

Dissertation presented by Mgr. Vladimíra Dostálová,
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External Assessment: Dr. Stefanie Auer, Professor for Dementia Studies Danube University
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This dissertation focuses on the needs of older people in home health care in the Czech Republic. The work mainly consists of 4 research papers of which three were published in peer reviewed journals, two publications (scoping review, qualitative study of the needs of care recipients) in an international journal and one paper (qualitative study of experiences of nurses providing home care) is still under review in August 2021. One paper published in a National Czech Journal was a “research task” (page 43) for the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic.

Mgr. Dostalova opens her dissertation with an excellent definition- section of important terms such as “human needs”, “Person -centered care” and the long term care setting in the Czech Republic.

The first research part analyses existing data from the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) on the evolution of long- term care in the Czech Republic between the years 2000 and 2016. In this analysis it was uncovered that- despite the state strategy to increase home care- marginal increases in homecare became evident. The next part of the dissertation analyses the international literature with respect to the needs of older people in home care. This analysis provided insight into the needs of older people from their own perspective and Mgr. Dostálová and colleagues uncovered that there were no published research studies on this topic from the Czech Republic, therefore international publications were used for analysis. In a next step, Mgr.

Dostálová performed two qualitative studies in which firstly the needs of care recipients and secondly experiences of nurses working in home care were explored. Due to the COVID Pandemic, some interviews had to be conducted via telephone and the samples had to be reduced. However, important hypothesis and insights could be drawn for further research activities in the future. One of the most important insights was, that needs of care recipients have to be taken into account when providing quality care and secondly, professionals caring for people at home need to continuously and critically reflect on the needs of care recipients at home. Continuous education and professional supervision of professionals was concluded from the study.

The research papers

The first paper analyses the situation of homecare in the Czech Republic. Data between the years 2000 and 2016 were used. The results of this analysis were published in 2018 in a National Journal (Dostálová, Vladimira a Iva Holmerová. Analýza vývoje počtu pacientů domácí zdravotní péče, hospitalizovaných pacientů a klientů pobytových zařízení sociálních služeb v letech 2000–2016. *Geriatric a gerontologie*. 2018/7/3,3,91-130. ISSN 1805-4684). This paper uncovers the important implication that despite the strategic goal of most countries to increase in home care recipients. On the contrary, it was found that there was a marked increase in the number of hospitalizations of 65+ patients and a rapid increase in the number of clients in residential care facilities, including unsuccessful applications (here, an increase by 171% was observed, page 29) for these services. Mgr. Dostálová is presenting an update in which no major changes are reported since the analysis was performed (page 45).

The second paper is a scoping review: Dostálová, V., Bártová, A., Bláhová, H., & Holmerová, I. (2020). The needs of older people receiving home care: a scoping review. *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*. Doi:10.1007/s40520-020-01505-3.

In this review, 15 articles were analyzed, and the authors conclude, that older home care recipients living with chronic illness and reduced self-sufficiency are able to express their needs and wishes. Care must therefore be planned in line with recipients' needs and wishes, and a "holistic approach " is suggested.

In the third article: Dostálová, V., Bártová, A., Bláhová, H., & Holmerová, I. The experiences and needs of frail older people receiving home health care: a qualitative study. *International Journal of Older People Nursing* (has been published in August 2021), the authors performed individual interviews (some in person, some over the telephone) and the main outcome was, that older people are able to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with home health care. The results of this study revealed that the quality of care might be crucial for frail older people.

Finally, the fourth article of this dissertation: Dostálová, V., Bártová, A., Bláhová, H., & Holmerová, I. The needs of older people in home health care from the nurses' perspective: a qualitative study. Currently under review in the *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, presents the results of 3 focus group interviews held with 17 nurses providing home care. In the conclusions, the authors take a critical position which is highly adequate considering the current situation of home care. For example, the authors conclude that: "Nurses should bear in mind that their perception of patients' needs is not always in line with what patients' needs and wishes are." And the authors emphasize that: "Nurses' undergraduate and postgraduate education and their lifelong learning should be oriented towards a holistic approach to patients and person-centred care. "and further: "Organisations providing home health care should train nurses not just in technical skills but also in person-centred care, so that patients' autonomy will be maintained when planning and providing care, especially with regard to privacy, independence, decision-making and cooperation."

Some important topics were identified such as the need to be informed- the need to transdisciplinary- trans-setting communication etc. The limitations of the study (for example small sample size) were referred to.

Points of critique:

One of the main points of critique for the qualitative study of care recipients' needs is the selection of participants and the presence of the responsible nurses during the interview in some instances. Care recipients are highly dependent persons- especially since one of the motifs is to stay at home and the fear of having to leave home upon criticizing the current situation and the care quality might influence the person's verbal output during the interview. However, the feasibility of asking recipients of care about their needs has been demonstrated and some hypothesis can be generated for future studies, the results however cannot be generalized. These limitations should be more strongly emphasized in the "limitation section" of the paper. Future, more objective and innovative methodologies could be discussed and suggested. A similar critique could be formulated for the interviews with nurses for the second paper. Therefore, the practice recommendations (page 127/128) seem feasible, but some are not directly supported by evidence from the research presented. Here more reflection is warranted and the need for additional research should be pointed out.

Throughout the paper, titles of publications in Czech language should be translated into English for the international reader -usually, translations are presented in square brackets. Also, some of the Figure- labeling is inconsistent (English and Czech)- for example on page 34.

Conclusion

This dissertation provides pioneering insights into the situation of home care in the Czech Republic and Mgr. Dostálová seems to be braking new and very important grounds. Two of the papers have been published in international peer-reviewed journals with sufficient impact. One paper was published nationally and was a research task from the Health Ministry of the Czech Republic. Based on the good work of Mgr. Dostálová, future research providing further insight into the structure of home care in the Czech Republic can be performed that will speed up the state strategy roll-out “home care before residential care”. **I therefore recommend, that the thesis of Mgr. Dostálová should be admitted into the defense procedure.**