Tittel: How individuals with dementia in nursing homes maintain their dignity through life storytelling – a case study

Forfatter: Heggestad, A. K. T. and Slettebø, Å.


Sammendrag:
Aims and objectives: The aim of this article was to present and discuss findings on what individuals with dementia do by themselves to maintain or promote their dignity of identity when they live in a nursing home.

Background: The majority of residents living in Norwegian nursing homes suffer from dementia. Individuals who suffer from dementia are particularly vulnerable, and their dignity of identity is at risk. It is therefore of great importance to explore how we can maintain their dignity of identity.

Design: The study builds on a phenomenological and hermeneutic design.

Methods: The article reports three cases or life stories based on participant observation in two different nursing homes and interviews with five residents with dementia living in these nursing homes. Fifteen residents with dementia from these nursing home wards were included in the overall study.

Results: Individuals with dementia living in nursing homes may use life storytelling or narratives to manage chaos and to find safety in their lives. Storytelling is also used as a way to present and maintain identity. We can see this as a way of maintaining dignity of identity or social dignity.

Conclusion: Life storytelling can be seen as an important way of preserving dignity for people with dementia. It is of great importance that health care professionals are open to and listen to the life stories people with dementia tell.

Relevance to clinical practice: As nurses we have an obligation to ensure that dignity is enhanced in care for people with dementia. Knowledge about how residents with dementia use life storytelling as a way to maintain dignity is therefore of great importance to health care workers in nursing homes.
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