Volunteers’ experiences building relationships with long-term care residents who have advanced dementia

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- Over 60% of residents in LTC have dementia and are likely to be more dependent than residents without cognitive impairment.
- There is a call for relationship-centered approach which promotes mutually beneficial relationships between and among the person in need of care, their family members and friends, and paid care staff.
- The purpose of this study is to understand volunteers’ perspectives on their work with long-term care residents who have moderate to advanced dementia.
Methods

• Explorative qualitative study.
• Volunteers recruited from a Transitional Care Unit in an acute care setting, as well as one medium and one large not-for-profit long-term care homes.
• Volunteers - adults (>=18) with at least one-year experience volunteering with residents who have dementia.
• 16 volunteers were interviewed in three group interviews (Site 1, N=6; Site 2, N=4; Site 3, N=3) and three individual interviews.
• Volunteers’ experiences interacting with people with advanced dementia - how they care for and interact with people with advanced dementia; how they involve family; and how they support staff.
• Data analysis - Braun and Clarke’s (2013) approach to thematic analysis.
Results

- Relationships in Dementia Care Volunteering
  - Mutuality in Relationship
  - Bereavement
  - Empathy as a Foundation for Relationship
  - Family as the Focus of Volunteer Relationships
  - Staff Support for Volunteer Relationships
Discussion

• With support and appreciation from staff and family members, volunteers were able to experience themselves as members of the care team, and this facilitated their work.

• We recommend further study of:
  • volunteer support and role preparation
  • volunteer preparedness for death
  • volunteers’ interactions with families
  • incorporation of volunteers into care teams

• Work to further delineate the networks of relationships within LTC could enhance capacity by cultivating community.

Key References:


Canadian Institute for Health Information (n.d.). Profile of residents in residential and hospital-based continuing care, 2017-2018


