PERCEPTIONS OF NURSING HOME STAFF OF THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ON THE HEALTH OF INSTITUTIONALIZED OLDER ADULTS

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Introduction

Statement of Problem

• With life expectancy increasing, the number of adults aged 65 and older by the year 2030 will account for 20% of the nation’s population (Glaister & Blair, 2008).

• As our society continues to grow older, chronic health and mental health conditions will arise and, in turn, create a high increase for long term care services in the United States (Oosterveld-Vlug, Pasman, Van Gennip, Willems, & Onwuteaka-Philipsen, 2013).

• Social engagement is an important indicator of an older adult’s quality of life and is said to include social and emotional connections with others (Park, Zimmerman, Kinslow, Shin, & Roff, 2012).

• Social interactions on a daily basis with residents can improve their health, enhance their quality of life, and increase positive behavior while living in a nursing home (Leone et al., 2012).

Research Questions

• What is the nursing home staff understanding of the effects of social engagement on a resident’s health?

• What are the perspectives of nursing home staff toward social engagement as a contributing factor to a resident’s quality of life?

• What is the nursing home staff’s perspective on how social engagement effects residents’ behavior?

• Staff’s perspectives on if training will promote social interactions between staff and residents?
Social Work Relevance

• Social work practice with older adults is the fastest growing sector in the field of social work (Sampson et al., 2009)

• Social workers should act to ensure that all individuals have access to opportunities that will enhance their life (NASW, 2013)

• In a nursing home setting, social workers should make sure that residents have social interactions throughout the day.

• Social workers look to fortify relationships among individuals for many reasons, one of them being to enhance the well-being of the individual (NASW, 2013)

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Cross-cultural Relevance

• Opportunity to learn how various cultures view social engagement

• Understanding the differences amongst the nursing home residents and the way they interact with staff and other residents

• Staff from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds can interact with residents in a unique way
Methods

Sample
- 31 staff members from a nursing home located in the city of Long Beach, California
- Non-random selected group of participants due to availability and convenience
- Both male and female; age group and ethnic backgrounds varied
- Participation was firmly voluntary

Data Collection
- Collected through a self-administered questionnaire that measured the understanding of the nursing home staff of the effects of social engagement on a resident’s health conditions
- Participants were presented with both the informed consent form and the questionnaire
- Given approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey questionnaire
- One box that the informed consents were dropped in labeled “Consent Form”, and a separate box for the questionnaires labeled “Questionnaire”
Methods

Variables & Instruments

• Questionnaire incorporated both demographic questions, as well as statements with scale grading

• Included statements related to the staff’s perceptions of social engagement and physical health and psychological well-being, social engagement in nursing homes, and staff training to promote social interactions between staff and older residents

• Variables: Quality of Life, Behavior, Health

Data Analysis

• Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (SPSS)

• Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the demographic information

• Three scales were computed from the research questions; the scales were health, quality of life, and behavior.

• Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to determine the internal consistency of the scales

• Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between the primary measures and staff’s endorsement on training

• Independent t-test was used to compare the primary measures with the staff that have a family member or friend living in a nursing home
Results

- Three scales were created to measure the staff’s perceptions about the association between social engagement and health, quality of life and nursing home resident’s behavior with higher scores indicating greater endorsement.
- A four item health scale with a strong internal consistency .80, a two item quality of life scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .46, and a two item behavior scale Cronbach’s alpha of .41 were computed.
- Over 50% of the nursing home staff endorsed the idea that social engagement affects health conditions, both physical and mental ($M = 13.39$, $SD = 2.14$).
- Results suggest that the more knowledge about the impact of social engagement on health, quality of life, and behavior nursing home staff had, the more likely they were to endorse the receipt of training about social engagement and finding a way to improve social interactions with the residents.
- Overall, staff that had someone they personally knew in a nursing home, also had a higher understanding of the importance social engagement has on health and behavior of a resident.
- There were no significance found between any demographic characteristic and the scales.
Implication for Social Work

- Social workers in nursing homes need to develop programs that increase social engagement and advocate for regular training for nursing home staff.

- Increased knowledge of the staff shows that trainings would be welcomed into the nursing home due to the importance of providing an environment that will promote well-being for a resident.

- Social workers need to conduct research in order to better understand the perspectives of nursing home staff in other locations throughout the nation.

- Studies need to be done to determine which programs and training would be most effective for the nursing home staff, which in turn would increase the quality of life of a resident and add to the knowledge base regarding evidence based practice.

- Nursing home staff should continue to be educated and trained on the importance of social engagement.
References