

An Ethnographic Study of Workforce Integration of Health Care Workers with Refugee Backgrounds in Ageing Citizens in Germany

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Abstract : Demographic changes, like the ageing population in European countries and shortage of nursing staff, the increasing number of people with severe cognitive impairment, and elderly socially isolated people raise important questions about who will provide long-term care for ageing citizens. Due to the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, some health care institutions for ageing citizens in Europe invited first generation immigrants to start a nursing career and providing them language skills, nursing training, and internships. The aim of this ethnographic research was to explore the social processes affecting workforce integration and how newcomers enact good care in ageing citizens in a German nursing home. By ethnographic fieldwork, 200 hours of participant observations, 25 in-depth interviews with immigrants and established staff, 2 focus groups with 6 immigrants, and 6 established staff members, data were analysed. The health care institution provided the newcomers a nursing program on psychogeriatric theory and nursing skills in the psychogeriatric field and professional oriented language skills. Courses of health prevention and theater plays accompanied the training. The knowledge learned in education could be applied in internships on the wards. Additionally, diversity and inclusivity courses were given to established personal for cultural awareness and sensitivity. They learned to develop a collegial attitude of respect and appreciation, regardless of gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion or belief, age sexual orientation, or disability and identity. The qualitative data has shown that social processes affected workforce integration, like organizational constraints, staff shortages, and a demanding workload. However, zooming in on the interactions between newcomers and residents, we noticed how they tinkered to enact good care by embodied caring, playing games, singing and dancing. By situational acting and practical wisdom in nursing care, the newcomers could meet the needs of ageing residents. Thus, when health care institutions open up nursing programs for newcomers with refugees' backgrounds and focus on talent instead of shortcomings, we might as well stimulate the unknown competencies, attitudes, skills, and expertise of newcomers and create excellent nurses for excellent care.

Keywords : established staff, Germany, nursing, refugees

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