

Creating a Dementia-Friendly Community

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Abstract : The concept of dementia-friendly communities focuses on the lived experience of people who have dementia and is most relevant to addressing their needs and the needs of those people who live with and provide support for them. The goal of communities becoming dementia-friendly is for dementia to be normalized and recognized as a disabling condition. People with dementia find being connected to self, to others, and to the environment by meaningful activities as important. According to the concept underlying dementia-friendly communities, people with dementia or cognitive decline can continue to live in the community if their residential community has sufficiently strong social capital. The aim of this study is to explore staff and leaders' experiences in implementing interventions to enhance a more inclusive dementia-friendly community. A municipality in northern Sweden with a population of approx. 100 000 inhabitants decided to create a dementia friendly municipality. As part of the initiative, a Centre for support was established. The Centre offered support for both individuals and groups, did home visits, and provided information about Dementia. Interviews were conducted with staff who had undergone training in a structured form of multidimensional support, the PER-model®, and worked at the Centre for support. The staff consisted of registered nurses, occupational therapists, and specialized nurses who had worked there for more than five years, and all had training in dementia. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Results suggest that implementing the PER-model® of support for persons in the early stages of dementia and their next of kin added a much-needed form of support and perceived possibilities to enhance daily life in the early stages of dementia. The staff appreciated that the structure of PER-model® was evidenced based. They also realized that they never even considered that the person with dementia also needed support in the early stages but that they now had tools for that as well. Creating a dementia friendly municipality offering different kinds of support for all stages of dementia is a challenge. However, evidence-based tools and a broad spectrum of different types of support, whether individual or group, are needed to tailor to everyone's needs. A conviction that all citizens are equal and should all be involved in the community is a strong motivator.

Keywords : dementia, dementia-friendly, municipality, support

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