

Therapeutic Nihilism: Challenging Aging Diseases in Cameroon

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Abstract : Our cultural stance has deep implications for the psychological and physical well-being of the old. Cameroon is still rooted on the traditional belief that stipulates that; the aged are best catered for in the family setting where the children and grandchildren are supposed to give in return for services invested on them by the former. This is why up till date, there are no “Rest Homes” or “Convalescent hospitals” despite the rising challenges faced by the aged in this context. Beside the special measure set aside to cater for the aged, such as “Rest Homes” for the healthy, “Convalescent hospitals” are created set to cater for the health of the aged in the Western context with other facilities such as geriatric units. The health care practitioners are aware of aging diseases and have trained human resources like Gerontologists to cater for the aged and aging diseases. Meanwhile, in Africa and Cameroon in particular, such infrastructural and human resources are still to be considered in the health care system. It can be assumed that the aged and aging diseases are still to be considered in the health care system in this context. This is why we talk of therapeutic nihilism, where the aged are mixed up with other categories of patients with no special attention given to them. This qualitative study carried out in the Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon, with their best referent hospitals, reveal that; the aged and aging diseases are still a myth in this context. Data collected in both private and public health institutions show that there is only one public institution in Cameroon that has a geriatric unit with no specialists. Patients who are treated in this unit are considered as aged with terminal diseases that need palliative care and not intensive care. Cameroon is still lacking in terms of health care to the aged and ageing diseases. Like other patients, the aged are treated with a lot of laxity and no value. There is an emergency to create special health care units for geriatrics and and train gerontologist. Mentally or physically ill aged faced medical rational with psychodynamic treatment considered as waste of time. The aged are less likely to be regarded salvageable when they enter a hospital in serious conditions due to the lack of specialists and geriatric units for them. The implication of this study is to sensitization the stake holders for an urgent need to extend special care units for the aged and aging diseases in this context.

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