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## Evidence-based counseling to support independent living in old age

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**Introduction:** In Austria, at the moment, sufficient data on the independent living of people aged 70+ living at home is not available. This data is the prerequisite for deriving the demand for counseling in order to support independent living.

**Aim:** In the framework of preventive senior counseling by registered nurses, problem areas and resources as well as the subjective functional health of people aged 70+ living at home were recorded and based on these findings individual counseling and information on the support of independent living was provided.

**Method:** By means of a nursing assessment, the subjective functional health response independence of 345 people aged 70+ living at home was assessed taking into account all five health components of the ICF classification (WHO 2001). Following the nursing assessment, standardized counseling was conducted on nursing and health matters, social and institutional matters as well as financial and legal matters based on the individual problem areas and resources.

**Results:** In total, 345 elderly people living at home with an average age of 83.5 years received 1426 consultations on nursing and health topics as well as on financial, legal, social and institutional matters. Five risk groups were identified: People aged 80+, people not living alone, people at risk of falls, people with a high need of support and care as well as people with limited self-care competence. There was a significant correlation between above named risk groups and the conducted counseling on the following topics: Offers by municipal social services, specific exercises and improvement of mobility, acquisition and use of aids, intake of medication, medical assessment, safe housing, eating and drinking as well as early symptoms.

**Discussion:** Four identified risk groups of elderly people living at home are according to current literature, vulnerable groups who are considered at risk in their independent lifestyle. In contrast to current literature, the group of people living alone is not confirmed as vulnerable group but the group of people not living alone. Therefore we can assume that those people enjoy great support by their relatives in coping with daily life activities and the responsibility for leading an independent life often lies with the relatives. In this context counseling may ease the care situation from the viewpoint of the relatives and the affected.

### Biography

Christa Them has obtained her Nursing degree in Vienna in 1982. She has completed her Diploma of Pedagogics in Vienna as well as the Doctoral studies of Pedagogics. In 2003, she was promoted to Professor in Health Sciences under special consideration of nursing science at UMIT. In 2006, she was appointed as University Professor of Nursing Sciences at UMIT. She was Rector of UMIT from 2009 until 2014 and has been Head of the Institute of Nursing Science at UMIT since 2006. She has published more than 40 papers in reputed journals with the focus on nursing pedagogics, educational policy, qualitative nursing research and care of people suffering from age-related diseases.

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