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Counseling in difficult decision making situations: An offering for family caregivers of people with dementia and students

Statement of the Problem: Family caregivers take on a responsible task when caring for people with dementia. The subjective perspective of family caregivers has been ascertained after a systematic literature review and the selection of a qualitative research design based on n=14 problem-centered interviews. Ethical questions are a major challenge for family caregivers as they have to make decisions for people with dementia that conflict with autonomy and safety. The results of the study show that family caregivers of people with dementia often miss differentiated counseling to various subjects. Furthermore, nursing students have to expand their consulting skills. Consequently, the aims were to develop a counseling facility and to integrate it in existing curricula.

Method: Within the conceptual work an offer analysis showed that there was no counseling in difficult decision-making situations in the immediate vicinity. A literature analysis was carried out to find an adequate teaching method. Finally, cognitive apprenticeship was chosen.

Results: Four difficult decision-making situations for family members of people with dementia were identified: (1) Establishment of a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy; (2) measures involving deprivation of liberty; (3) assumption of care; and (4) selection of a suitable form of care. Decision coaching serves as a theoretical basis in the counseling facility. The existing curriculum was revised to offer nursing students to participate in real counseling situations via video.

Conclusion: This work is of great importance for the professionalization and academization of nursing care in Germany.