

Caring about Diversities – SNSF Div. 1, Project No. 10001C_192339/1

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Project Summary

Background: Organizing nursing home (NH) care for elder persons is challenged by increasing multimorbidity & cognitive impairment of residents and growing diversity of residents and staff. Diversities are specifically challenging for NHs because residents have low capabilities to enact self-determination, and staff has considerable power to determine how care is provided and how individual diversities are considered in it. Quality of care is increasingly discussed, and innovative models of NH care develop. Ethno-specific NH care in the form of *Mediterranean* wards is one such innovative form of service provision in Switzerland. It may be regarded as an experimental setting that may inform mainstream care provision. The most promising observation is that the practice of ethno-specific care is subject to constant negotiations, which seems to enhance reflexivity of staff and organizations. Thus, being experienced in negotiating seems to be a key feature of professional and organizational competence to handle diversities. The proposed project is using an interactionist perspective to explore care practice and to better understand how professional concepts are enacted in practice. There are two well-established concepts addressing professional competencies to adequately care for diverse health service users: (trans)cultural competence, and person-centred care. They show similarities which may contribute to the formulation of a new model of *diversity sensitivity*, bridging weaknesses of both concepts.

Aim: This project aims in a first phase at a critical exploration of diversity-related professional agency in interactions with residents, and of the competencies expected to be involved. In a second phase, the project will co-constructively elaborate new training formats and suitable evaluation methods that will be exploratively piloted.

Methods: Our methodology, informed by Ethnography and Grounded Theory (GT), will consist of iterative circles of data collection and analysis, starting (phase 1) with an open ethnographic exploration using participant observation and ethnographic interviewing, followed by continuously narrowing the focus of analysis on describing *diversity sensitivity* & its enactment in practice. The results will then (phase 2) be elaborated into a conception of *diversity sensitive care*, identification of associated competencies, a teaching format and an evaluative format for its implementation in practice, through literature reviews and co-constructive workshops with experts and participants. Finally, 3 piloting teaching sessions will be conducted and evaluated to test the elaborated conception and to explore its potential to enhance diversity sensitivity in NH care practice. Setting: The exploration will start with the ethno-specific setting of service provision (Mediterranean wards), it will be enlarged to standard care and punctually involve other types of group-specific care settings (based e.g. on religion, sexual orientation, social marginalization). Data analysis: In ethnographic research, data analysis is a constant process iterating with data collection, interpretation and dissemination of results. The proposed project will use a methods guideline that is informed by Symbolic Interactionism and GT.

Benefit for practice and research: A conception of *diversity-sensitivity* in care has considerable potential to bridge the either/or gap between culture-specific, (trans)culturally competent and person-centred care. It will take into consideration the specific constellations of institutional long-term care (LTC) and will thus add to the body of knowledge on equity and diversity management in health care, which mainly focuses on acute care in hospitals. The project will invest in a sound empirical exploration and theoretical contextualization of interdependencies between professional concepts, theoretical knowledge and agency in practice that will contribute to advance academic and practical knowledge on diversity and inequality.

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