

Forum Practical Palliative Geriatrics
Research project on Validation® and Basal Stimulation

Prerequisites and Effects of Two Methods of Person-centered Communication with People with Dementia.

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Summary:

This project utilized a case study methodology. It gives not only a conceptual but also a pragmatic view of the objectives, functions, effects – i.e. prerequisites and modes of action – in two widely recognized intervention methods for person-centered communication with people who have dementia: Basal Stimulation created by Fröhlich/Bientstein, and Validation created by Naomi Feil.

The case studies were done in two wards in two different nursing homes. The research team leaders decided to use pseudonyms: St. Moritz for the ward with emphasis on basic stimulation and Antonius for the ward with a focus in Validation.

The procedure for selecting the wards was the same for both case studies. In an interview, a ‘second generation¹’ representative of each communication method was asked to observe and identify a ward where the method could be accurately practiced.

The researchers made contact with the management of the ward and the head of nursing of the institution and obtained their agreement to participate in the research project.

Similar surveys were conducted for both case studies:

- Observations by experts of the respective communication method during several days on the ward;
- Group discussion with the teams of each ward to collect successful and less successful care results

¹ an individual who is trained but not the developer of the communication method

- Analysis of care documentation
- Interviews with management regarding general conditions, management and nursing on the wards
- In addition, background information on Validation and Basal Stimulation was provided which could be used to interpret the case studies
- Detailed literature research on each concept and scientific results of both communication methods
- Interviews with the founders and 'second generation' representatives of both communication methods.

The evaluation of the case studies shows the following results:

The effects of Validation and Basal Stimulation can be conceptually and empirically described in qualitative criteria.

Regarding the basic attitude, the effects of Validation and Basal Stimulation are very similar, in that one can speak of a common 'person-centered communication' attitude.

It is precisely because the two case studies are 'models of good practice' that they gave insight into the question of what prerequisites and framework conditions must be met in order to implement the methods.

This insight in the framework shows that the effects of Validation and Basal Stimulation go far beyond the correct application of techniques that are taught in the two methods. They encompass organizational culture, processes and structures.

To implement a method of communication with people who have dementia requires more than just staff training.

Successful implementation requires that the culture and structure itself reflects the basic attitude of person-centered communication.

Successful implementation, in turn, has repercussions on the culture and structure of the institution. Prerequisites and effects of both methods of communication are closely linked and there is a cyclical correlation.

Analysis of the results and interpretation of the data leads to an operational model for both methods of communication with people with dementia.

Elements of the model include the perspective of the people with dementia, the perspective of the caregivers and the perspective of the organization, which lead to framework conditions and structures that arise between these perspectives.

All three perspectives are indispensable for the successful implementation of person-centered communication.