Caregivers of the institutionalized older adult: preparation challenges

Abstract

During old age, the state of dependence increases as a result of the loss of physical and mental capacities of this stage, so more attention and care is required, this has caused that in recent years nursing homes dedicated to caring and serving older adults are presented as an actual solution. However, the treatment provided is not always adequate for the needs of the elderly, since it has been found that caregivers are not always qualified to provide care and assistance.

Keywords: aging, nursing homes, caregivers, institutionalized elders

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), life expectancy increased approximately five years from 2000 to 2015, this significant increase has as precedent the control of various diseases through prevention and treatment. As a result of this increase in life expectancy, the population of older adults worldwide has risen to unseen levels, becoming a social and health problem. For this reason, it is essential to be aware of the remains and perspectives that the attention of this population sector implies, hence, according to Vinaccia et al., states that the most important challenge on aging studies involves not only understanding the needs and conditions associated with this process and their diseases, but also the psychological, cognitive and social factors that contribute to experiencing a healthy and successful aging as part of the quality of life.

Method

To carry out the present study, a semi-structured interview was prepared for formal caregivers. This interview was classified into eight dimensions, oriented to know about their training, vocation, perceived work advantages, burnout, limitations of care, understanding, environment and working conditions, as well as their work self-esteem. This study presents some of the results of an exploratory study that contemplated the 23 nursing homes of the public and private senior citizens of the city of San Luis Potosí, Mexico, which offer their services for seniors. However, at the time of requesting authorization from the directors of these institutions, not all agreed to participate, so that only the voluntary collaboration of three residences was counted.

Results

In regard to the interview with the caregivers, the following profile was found: The caregivers of the female sex predominate, their ages range from 18 to 53 years, with the majority concentrating in the range of 18 to 30 years. Similarly, in terms of educational level, it was found that only a percentage less than 20% of the caregivers reported having completed a technical career in nursing, while 80% went from the basic level without finishing, to upper secondary education. While in relation to work experience, most caregivers report having less than one year of experience, and only a small part of them mentions having more than 7 years of work experience. Likewise, with respect to the dimensions explored, it was found that: Concerning training, most of the caregivers reported feeling prepared and trained to carry out their duties even without having any training course, also indicating that rarely or almost never seek information related to the care of older adults. Respect to the vocation, the caregivers consider having the necessary patience with the elderly and indicate not having difficulties to deal with the reactions of old age, however, most of the caregivers’ report being in search of another type of work that give them financial compensation in a better way.

In relation to the perception they have about their job advantages, the caregivers indicate that they feel better people with the tasks they perform with their elders, likewise, this relationship gives them strength to continue responding to the care they provide to them, in the same way, report that their personal experience and that of their co-workers has been very useful to improve the level of attention they offer.

On the other hand, in the burnout dimension caregivers report experiencing physical and mental fatigue due to the high number of elderly people under their care and the various work activities they perform. While, in the dimension referring to the limitations of care, the majority indicates that they feel capable of completely satisfying the needs and demands of care for the elderly, however, they report that in some cases the institution is not able to provide accompaniment and love that older adults require. Regarding understanding, it was found that caregivers have the ability to understand and cope with the changes that are experienced during old age, which involves behavioral changes, movement difficulties and lack of toilet training, as well as the lack of memory and mental deterioration. In respect of the environment and working conditions, caregivers report perceiving a cordial relationship of work with their colleagues, as well as with their boss, on the other hand, they indicate that their work activities do not interfere with the personal life of each one, however, a large number of caregivers reported not being satisfied with the payment.
they receive as they consider it very low and cannot satisfy their basic needs. Finally, the dimension of work self-esteem, all caregivers indicate that they are fully satisfied and enjoy the activities they perform as a caregiver; however, they report not feeling valued or recognized for their work in the institution.

**Conclusion**

Certainly, in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, the organizations and institutions responsible for caring for the elderly do not have the necessary facilities or financing for the hiring of specialized and trained personnel to carry out their work as a caregiver, which means that our elderly do not count with quality of life or receive a decent treatment from these nursing homes.2,3

**Acknowledgments**

None.

**Conflicts of interest**

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest within the scope of this article.

**References**

