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GERONTOLOGIST SKILLS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION IN LONG-TERM RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR OLDER PERSONS

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In contemporary Western societies the population aging poses new challenges both to the policies and to the support systems for the older persons.

In Portugal, where the phenomena have a major impact, it has emerged a new professional profile, the gerontologist. From the beginning the gerontologist (Licenciate's Diploma in Gerontology) has emerged as a new professional exclusively devoted to providing care for the older persons and shares the labor market with other professionals who are usually leaders in LTRCs for the older persons, namely: managers, psychologists, nurses, sociologists, social educators and other social workers.

Recent studies (Pereira & Antão, 2014; Pereira & Caria, 2014) show a clear evidence of technical, organizational and communicative skills, which can be considered specific to this professional group (gerontologists) and which are distinctive from those shown by other professional caregivers. The focus goes to the sensibility of the gerontologists to detect in advance symptoms of a pathological aging, and to a personal contact with the older person and their families. It is still very valuable their ability to organize and develop innovative services and activities. The internalization of the concept of interdisciplinary and the ability to integrate and streamline interdisciplinary technical teams is also mentioned as a feature of this professional group. These profile skills have been considered by employers the main reasons to hire gerontologists rather than other professionals (Pereira, Mata & Pimentel, 2012).

In this study 160 older persons living in Portuguese LRTC are questioned about their satisfaction in regard to the effectiveness of organization. The older persons from LTRCs managed by a gerontologist are more likely to be "more satisfied" with provided care. This association was not explained by residents' characteristics or by the older person's circumstances as residents. These findings highlight the appropriateness of gerontologist skills in managing LTRCs.

Biography

Fernando Pereira completed his Ph.D. in Social Sciences from the University of Trs-os-Montes and Alto Douro, 2004. He acts as Researcher collaborator of the Center for Research and Educational Intervention Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto, since 2008. Researcher collaborator Research Center Mountain CIMO, the College of Agriculture of Bragança since 2008. He was an effective investigator of this center since 2003. Coordinator of Nucleus of Research and Intervention of the Elderly / IPB, from 2009-2015. Founding Member and Investigator Group ASPTI Research (Social Analysis Technical Working Intellectual) since 2002. ASPTI is an informal group that involves researchers from several national higher education institutions is engaged among other activities of organizing seminars scientific research projects, monitoring of academic research evidence. Principal Investigator of the project "BeHome BeHappy" - EIP-AHA (European Innovation Partnership and Healthy Active-Ageing), European Commission, 2013-2015. In the scope of this pedagogical and scientific activity he published several books, chapters of books, articles on the subject of the elderly and aging, highlighting the book "Theory and Practice of Gerontology: A Guide for Caregivers of the Elderly", PsicoSoma 2012 and 2017 (second edition).

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