

## Introduction: Considerations on learning needs

Due to the very different educational structure and customs of the participating countries for those who care for the elderly with dementia, it is difficult to see that one program can meet the educational needs that are present in the project countries. Many different people care for people with dementia, from the unskilled worker to social and health assistants. Therefore, it is suggested that since the topic is new to most people working in the care sector (persons with dementia and another ethnicity do not take up much space in care yet) it should be possible to differentiate the content and methods.

Overall, we do not think that newly educated health care professionals or uneducated staff have the skills to care for people with dementia from another ethnic background; they need more education and experience. Generally, there is a need for the development of intercultural skills in health care. We are also aware of the need for differentiated content, as there are employees of different level of education and skills. For most professionals, the topic is new.



The following considerations on learning needs for staff, working with persons from another background suffering from dementia, are the results of interviews and workshops from the first task in the project and literature.

It seems that there is a need of learning for both relatives and staff. Overall, you can think that it is a task for the staff to provide knowledge to the relatives as well as learning themselves, which again demand abilities

Some issues were concerning the person with dementia, some concerning the relatives and some concerning the staff.

Concerning the person with dementia, it is important to know the life history, especially when you give care to people with another cultural background than your own. Language is a challenge when the person with dementia has never learned it or has forgotten what he learned. It can be hard to offer the right care to the person with dementia if you cannot communicate through language. Besides, it can be hard to assess the stage of dementia when you do not have the language as a common communication platform.

Concerning the relatives, there may be language barrier between staff and relatives and often the relatives lack understanding of the system. Many relatives from another background do not use the system, for instance by not using the offers of home care in the early stages of dementia. The consequence is that when the illness progresses, the relatives cannot manage the care at home and the person with dementia must be sent directly to a nursing home. There is also a lack of

understanding the disease “dementia” – or people from other cultures understands the disease differently.

To make sure that care staff were better enabled to meet the need of people with dementia and a different ethnicity, many different teaching topics were suggested. The main characteristic of a number of these proposals were, that they are about softer issues and topics that are more general. For instance:

- Being able to analyze, learn to reason, find causes, and predict consequences.
- How to establish relations, relationship and cooperation with persons in need of care.
- Body language, when language is gone the body language is what is left.
- Focus on communication.
- In addition, of cause, we should talk about multi-ethnicity, cultures and values controversial issues, for instance forced marriages, gender equality and different ethnicities.

Prerequisite for intercultural competence, it requires:

- Commitment (you have to want it)
- Practice (You have to throw yourself into it)
- Reflection (You have to learn from what is happening)

Having intercultural competence is in practice about having respect for other people's views of reality, even if it contradicts one's own experience and one's own perception of reality.

One must be able to think abstractly, imagine being in the other ones place, experiencing something completely different. One must dare to listen to how other people think and justify what they do. (“Basic book in cultural understanding” Iben Jensen; Social literature 2018)

The ability to self-reflect is essential. During a busy day it is difficult to realize and be aware of the feeling of understanding the world from your own perspective, and to reflect on why you react the way you do. Self-reflection is so important – and to have the courage to react **in** a situation when it occurs, to grab it and to talk about it.

You have to be curious in the communication, become competent in establishing relationships, patiently listening to all their worries and be empathic

Conflict prevention communication: Our conflict patterns are dependent on our culture and it is something we learn unconsciously while growing up. We must be able to look at ourselves from the outside. Why do we react the way we do?

One have to be courageous: To dare ask! To take a chance! To express one’s own values openly and hear about others’.

## References

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