John Adams scans a range of journals and highlights their relevance for nurses who work with older people

Bull MJ, Roberts J (2001)
Components of a proper hospital discharge for elders
Journal of Advanced Nursing 35, 4, 571-581
The interface between hospital and community services for older people remains a crucial one, so research findings on the discharge process can have an important role to play. This qualitative study undertaken in south London was based on the analysis of 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT), carers and older people themselves. The findings were generally positive. All members of the MDT viewed effective teamwork as essential to a 'proper' discharge. The development of a relationship of trust between team members was seen to be under potential threat from a local management policy of rotating some staff between different hospitals every three months. Any factor which hinders effective communication is likely to interfere with what respondents called 'proper' discharge planning.
30 references.

Given B, Given C, Azzouz F, Stommel M (2001)
Physical functioning of elderly cancer patients prior to diagnosis and following initial treatment
Nursing Research 50, 4, 222-232
This American study used a well-known tool, the SF-36, to measure the physical functioning of older people before and after cancer was diagnosed. The sample included patients with cancers of the breast, colon, lung and prostate, who were receiving treatment in community oncology departments. The findings indicated that site and stage of cancer prior to diagnosis did not affect functioning, but once treatment began, symptoms such as pain, fatigue and insomnia had a significant impact.
37 references.

van Thiel GJMW, van Delden JJM (2001)
The principle of respect for autonomy in the care of nursing home residents
Nursing Ethics 8, 5, 419-431
In this study of attitudes to autonomy held by Dutch nursing home managers and physicians, vignettes were used to ascertain their views. As the concept of autonomy itself is much debated by ethicists, the authors constructed the vignettes so that they epitomised four approaches to this principle. These included a 'liberal view', in which caregivers minimise interference in the lives of residents, and the 'Kantian ideal of moral autonomy', which requires that choices are seen by the staff as rational. The third and fourth options were a 'narrative approach', based on the consistent life story of the older person, and an 'ethic of care' which emphasised the relationship between caregivers and residents. The results of the study indicated that there was no clear pattern in the views held by staff, and so the authors conclude by emphasising the importance of avoiding stereotypical assumptions when discussing nursing home environments.
16 references.

Williams V, Robinson C (2001)
‘He will finish up caring for me’: people with learning disabilities and mutual care
British Journal of Learning Disabilities 29, 2, 56-62
At the time of the last census, almost 90 per cent of people with learning disabilities were living in the community, and most received support from family members. As carers get older, concerns tend to be expressed about who will be able to take over the ‘burden’ of caring. This study of the operation of the Carers Act 1995 was based on interviews with both carers and with the person with learning disabilities. One theme that emerged was that many people falling into the latter category also made a contribution to the functioning of the household. Tasks such as preparing food, lifting heavy objects, housework and gardening were all mentioned. Emotional support was also apparent. So the authors argue that society should recognise many relationships between older parents and adult children with learning disabilities as based on ‘mutual caring’.
28 references.

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