IN THE FOOTSTEP OF THE OLD VULNERABLE PATIENT

FOCUS ON USER INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

There is growing attention regarding user involvement in all stages of research projects. Geriatric patients are characterized by high age, multimorbidity, polypharmacy, frequently combined with functional impairments. Involving geriatric patients in research calls for reflection on their physical-, cognitive-, and social health as well as ethical considerations.

AIM

To study how user involvement with geriatric patients can evolve through this research project.

METHOD

The project "In the footstep of the old vulnerable patient" is an ethnographic field observation study of older patients' transition between the hospital and their homes.

Individual conversations with five hospitalized patients admitted to a department of geriatric medicine were conducted. The project’s aim, method, and what we wanted to be particularly observant about were discussed with the participants.

RESULTS

In the individual conversations, the participants expressed that they found the field observation study of going from hospital to their home relevant. They were engaged when talking about the project. In the transition, the participants experienced being alone. They told that they were dependent on their relatives and they often experienced being a burden to their children. They recommended involving relatives in the planned field observation study.

All participants expressed the importance of being seen as a person, beyond their functional limitations and need for help. They also suggested doing field observations in the transition from home to the hospital.

CONCLUSION

Encouraged by the findings, we designed the field observation study to include relatives. The researcher must be aware of creating a safe environment and meaningful engagement with ethical considerations when involving vulnerable older participants in research.