

# Nursing home care and its influence on quality of life of the elderly: bibliographic review

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## SUMMARY

**Introduction:** With increasing age there is a decrease in physical, cognitive, and psychological abilities and this has given rise to a need for the elderly to receive the attention and care; thus the creation and spread of nursing home care facilities. **Objective:** To identify the influence of the stay in the nursing home on the quality of life of the elderly. **Methodology:** This is a bibliographic review, guided by recommendations of the PRISMA protocol, by means of a search in different recognized electronic databases, 959 primary papers were identified by region, and for the methodological evaluation the Checklist STROBE was used; after using the criteria 18 papers were obtained. It should be noted that nursing home care arose in response to the problems and needs of the elderly, however many elderly recipients of such care generally rate their experience as poor due to such things as various complications in living conditions, developing diseases as well as a lack of visitation by relatives. **Results and conclusion:** The quality of life of the institutionalized elderly is worsening as manifested in their physical, cognitive, and psycho-emotional functions. Additionally, there is the presence of chronic-degenerative diseases that represent a risk to the health and life expectancy of the elderly. Efforts must be made to promote public policies that support healthy aging.

**Key words:** quality of life, elderly, nursing homes (DeCS; BIREME).

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, people aged 60 years have increased reaching approximately 11.7 million people worldwide. This is associated with a decline in fertility coupled with mortality at older ages and has thus created a historically unique aging situation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this situation has been possible thanks to the "success of public health policies and socio-economic development"<sup>(1)</sup>.

Between 1930 and 2014, life expectancy in Mexico has doubled, up 43 years in women and 39 years in men<sup>(2)</sup>, the implications of which is a greater demand for pension, retirement, and health services as well as changes in family organization and additional workloads for caregivers. By the year 2050, it is expected that women over 60 years of age will represent 23.3% of the population with men at 19.5%<sup>(3)</sup>. According to the National Population Council (known in Spanish as CONAPO), 12.5 million adults over 65 years of age lived in Mexico and it is expected that by the year 2030, this amount will reach approximately 20.4 million people<sup>(4)</sup>.

The increase in life expectancy implies a challenge for health systems worldwide, which directly influences the living conditions of the elderly, particularly the relationship to the financial security and social inclusion of each individual<sup>(5)</sup>. The concept of 'quality of life' entails an analysis from different points of view although in a general way it implies the self-perception of an individual's condition regarding social, cultural, spiritual and, of course, health aspects, whether physical or psychological, so that dependence on day-to-day actions and the dynamics in which social ties are determined are, to a certain extent, essential elements for obtaining quality of life<sup>(6)</sup>.

Today, nursing homes have appeared in response to the need for care and attention of the elderly. This segment of the population has been regarded as a vulnerable community, since at this stage of life, the elderly are prone to suffer decreases in their physical, cognitive, and psychological abilities<sup>(7)</sup>, a fact that has led to the establishment of policy actions in order to ensure optimal conditions of institutions that provide assistance services to the elderly. Likewise, considering that the elderly population is increasing, it is important for health personnel to become fully aware of and subsequently identify the ways in which the stay of an elderly person in a nursing home influences that individual's quality of life.

Therefore, the aim of this bibliographical review is to relate the influence that the stay in a nursing home has on the quality of life of the elderly. The methodology for the search and analysis of scientific papers is as follows.

## METHODOLOGY

Since this is a bibliographic review, the study was guided by the recommendations of the PRISMA Protocol (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses<sup>(8)</sup>,

and descriptive correlational studies were included in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, in full text, that were made on elderly people residing in nursing homes. The search was not limited to studies of recent years.

A search was carried out in the following recognized electronic journals in the area of health, using the Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS), combined through the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT, and 959 primary papers were identified by region:

- Latin America Region: Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem, Texto y Contexto Enfermagem, Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da U S P, Revista Enfermagem, Acta Paulista de Enfermagem, Online Brazilian Journal of Nursing, Ciencia y Enfermería (72).

- North-American Region: The Gerontologist, Journals of Gerontology, Journal of Applied Gerontology, Journal of Housing for the Elderly, Clinical gerontologist, Activities, Adaptation and Aging, Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics (876).

- African Region: Child Care in Practice, Sur African Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Africa Journal of Nursing and Midwifery(3).

- European Region: Journal of Food and Nutrition Research, Voprosy Pitania, Central European Journal of Nursing and Midwifery, European Journal of Mental Health Open Access, Advances in Gerontology, Revista Romana de Bioetica. Pediatria Wspolczesna(8).

When reviewing each paper, different methods of elimination were used: duplicate papers, mismatched by title, did not include related variables and did not include a clear objective, resulting in 18 scientific papers for detailed analyses.

In the methodological quality assessment of the selected studies, the STROBE Checklist and a codebook<sup>(9)</sup> were used. This way data extraction was made obtaining the most important information that meets the objective of the review. Likewise, the bias assessment was carried out through an adaptation of the bias assessment outlined in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions<sup>(10)</sup>.

## RESULTS

For purposes of reading comprehension, the results are presented according to several similar topics.

### **Mental health**

There are several situations related to the mental health of the elderly who live in nursing homes, of which depression stood out in particular. Studies reveal the rates of this mental condition as follows: an indicative of depression of 42.8% in elderly people who do not live in a nursing home and 35.7% in elderly people who live in a nursing home<sup>(11)</sup>; additionally, 33.3% of

moderate depression was identified<sup>(12)</sup>. Likewise, it is shown that in comparison, 42% of the population under study had mild levels of depression, 38% moderate, and 20% severe<sup>(13)</sup>. According to data reported in 2015, 39% of elderly people had moderate depression while 23% experienced severe depression<sup>(14)</sup>; other evidences identified that 63.3% did not show symptoms of depression, while the 30% exhibit mild signals and 6.7% moderate depression symptoms<sup>(15)</sup>. Finally, another study relates moods that commonly occur in elderly people who live in these institutions such as: sadness: 51%, melancholy: 32%, and joy: 15%<sup>(16)</sup>.

### **Self-perception of quality of life**

As part of this analysis, it was discovered that 34% of elderly people living in nursing homes rated their quality of life as very poor, while 30% rated it normal, 33% considered it good, and only 3% considered their quality of life quite good<sup>(17)</sup>. Regarding their experience of living in a care institution, 16.6% said that they felt very bad, 50% felt bad, 22.2% felt good, and 11.1% felt very well<sup>(18)</sup>, while other data indicates that 82% of elderly people perceive a lower quality of life with passing years, that is, the older the age the lower the quality of life ( $p = 0.211$ ), furthermore, elderly people with high education show more satisfaction with their lives ( $p = 0.989$ )<sup>(19)</sup>; while another study indicates that 56% of elderly people perceive a low quality of life<sup>(20)</sup>.

### **Dependence or Functional Capacity**

Some authors report that 64.28% of the elderly are dependent on basic actions of daily life<sup>(11)</sup>; however, others perceive that 77.5% presented good functional capacity, while 13.7% presented moderate dysfunction, and 8.8% severe dysfunction<sup>(21)</sup>. Conversely, it is shown that 19.8% show mild dependence and 80.2% zero dependence<sup>(20)</sup>.

### **Cognitive Status**

Concerning this area, it is reported that 58% of institutionalized elderly people showed mild cognitive impairment<sup>(12)</sup>, while other sources show that 78.57% show moderate cognitive impairment<sup>(11)</sup>, while other research indicates a percentage of 43.12% with cognitive impairment and 21.6% with dementia<sup>(14)</sup>. A study conducted in Colombia highlights that the cognitive status of a population with these characteristics is considered good when it reaches a rate of 98.5%<sup>(22)</sup> rate. Additionally, it was identified that 39.8% of a group of elderly people showed cognitive impairment and when associated with the gender variable, it revealed a contrast between men and women who obtained, on the MMSE scale, average scores of 14.8 and 12.8 ( $p = 0.0459$ )<sup>(23)</sup> respectively.

### **Associated Pathology**

Moreover, the percentage of diseases present in a population of elderly people are as follows: hypertension 50%, diabetes mellitus 23.6%, dyslipidemias 22.3%, and osteoporosis 15% ( $p = 0.010$ )<sup>(24)</sup>. Other authors show that 30% of the population suffers from HBP, 13% diabetes mellitus, while 5.2% did not have any disease<sup>(20)</sup>. In contrast, another study group described that 75% of the population is in good health<sup>(22)</sup>.

### **Family Status**

Finally, in the socio-affective area regarding family life, several authors' stress that 58% of elderly people are abandoned in care institutions by their family, 51% are sad, while 40% adapt to their new home. Regarding the frequency of visits from relatives, 50% are visited once a month, while 28% do not receive visits. They also identified that 50% of the population rate their family relationship as bad, 28% very bad, 17% good, and only 5% very good<sup>(18)</sup>. On the basis of similar statistical indices, it was found that 47.31% receive visits from relatives twice a month, 29.03% have no relatives, and 17% receive no visits<sup>(25)</sup>.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The diversity of results obtained underscores the way in which elderly people living in nursing homes exhibit symptoms of impairment in their quality of life; a situation that merits not only further analyses but a reconsideration of the actions implemented by institutions in order to take care of this population. The authors conclude that there is impairment in the quality of life of the institutionalized elderly population, one of the relevant factors being the absence of family care. In addition, they suggest that it is vital to strengthen the family bond to prevent depression or the feeling of abandonment, the latter being a risk factor for the progressive impairment of psycho-emotional functions.

A large number of elderly people who live in nursing homes reveal dependence on daily actions. They also manifest chronic-degenerative diseases that represent a risk to their health and life expectancy.

All of the above is relevant when considering that institutions responsible for taking care of the elderly require competent personnel, adequate infrastructure, and both strategies and care plans that will meet the needs of this segment of the population, thus improving the quality of life for them. Thus, it is considered necessary to strengthen policies that promote healthy aging.

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