

Perspectives of healthcare professionals on the collaboration with informal caregivers

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Introduction: Health and social policy show a growing importance of the social environment in providing healthcare, with an increase in responsibility to caregivers with respect to care for patients with acute or chronic illness. European long-term care systems rely heavily on provision of informal care and little is known about the availability of direct and indirect support for informal caregivers. Knowledge is lacking on how informal caregivers can be more actively involved in the therapy process in order to improve collaboration with informal caregivers.

Objectives: The aim of the study was first to explore the collaboration with informal caregivers from a theoretical perspective and second, to improve the collaboration between healthcare-professionals and informal caregivers.

Method: First, a thematic synthesis of 22 qualitative articles was performed, on the professional perspective on informal care. Second, a constructivist grounded theory approach was used to explore perspectives of ten occupational therapist, by conducting six individual semi-structured interviews followed by one focus group. Third, the outcomes are incorporated in workshops for occupational therapist to generate and improve collaboration with informal caregivers.

Results/implications for practice: The urgency to extend knowledge about how to involve the informal caregiver becomes clear. Systematic involvement of the informal caregiver during the care/rehabilitation process and beyond can improve collaboration with (healthcare) professionals. Enabling the informal caregiver to support relative(s) and working towards a form of partnership is a priority in the development of the (healthcare) professional career. New ways to develop competences for healthcare-professionals are being examined and developed.