

Abstract

Nursing Actions in Interaction with Older Persons with Severe Dementia of the Alzheimer Type: Symbolic Interactionism Perspective.

[Aim] The aim of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore nursing interaction with older persons having severe dementia of the Alzheimer type (DAT). **[Method]** Qualitative descriptive method was used. Symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical background. Participants were five nurses working at a dementia special care ward in two geriatric facilities and their residents, six older persons with DAT. Participant observations of interaction between participants and semi-structured interviews with nurses were conducted. **[Results]** Two types of nursing actions emerged after analyzing seven nursing situations: (1) interpreting cues in their residents' responses and (2) not using responses from their residents as cues. Nurses often used cues such as directional indicators, emotions, and complaints contained within their residents' responses. Nurses also relied on cues which could not be interpreted as symbolic interaction. Additionally, nurses employed two methods to decide their actions: adjusting their actions based on cues from their residents and deciding their actions using only their own assessment. Nurses also made choices about the continuing direction of their actions: to continue their caregiving or not. Which actions a nurse could use in a given situation after depended on whether the resident could understand the nurse's words or actions and whether the resident could react to the nurse's actions. **[Conclusion]** Nurses used a limited set of decision-making methods to determine their caretaking actions. Nurses: (1) actively created relationships that did not seem to be rejected from their residents, (2) obtained cues from these responses that they could interpret and (3) acted in ways that save their residents' initiative. Nurses acted mainly to integrate their residents' movements with the completion of their care tasks. Their actions seemed task-oriented; however, task-oriented care is essential for the day-to-day living of older persons with severe DAT. Nurses performed their care by using their residents' responses, so that nursing actions were never one-sided. Identifying symbolic interaction is important so that nurses can identify whether elderly people with severe DAT will participate in their caregiving interaction as an active constituent.