

Newsletter

ELLAN



European Later Life Active Network

The ELLAN network has been funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. It is a higher education institutions collaborative and networking project running from October 2013 to September 2016. The consortium includes 26 partners from 25 countries in Europe. ELLAN is coordinated by Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Unit of Health Care (Finland).

The project promotes European cooperation, exchange of good practice and innovation related to the ageing population and to the educational preparation of those who work with older people. The main aim of this project is to develop an agreed European Core Competences Framework (ECCF) for working with older people. The desired outcome of this project is improved quality of higher education for health and social care professionals working with older people.

The development of the ECCF is based upon five research workpackages (WP3-7), carried out in the first two years of the project:

1. Literature review and desk research exploring competences required in older people's care (WP3)
2. Qualitative research with older people focussing on their perceptions about required and desired competences of professionals (WP4)
3. Quantitative research exploring professionals views of competences needed to support older people (WP5)
4. Quantitative research of factors influencing health and social care students' views of (working with) older people (WP6)
5. Identification of best practice and innovative teaching and learning methods encouraging students to choose to work with older people (WP7)

The project targets educators and management staff at the partners and other higher education institutions in Europe. The indirect target groups are students, professional communities and older people themselves.

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Review of the literature (WP3)

A literature review was performed based on the following research question: “For the care of older persons, which competences of health and social professionals related to the CanMEDS-roles are described in the scientific literature and national reports”? The search was done in English, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, German and Polish. A total of 228 studies was included, mainly expert opinions and qualitative cross-sectional studies. Based on the literature role descriptions for working with older persons were composed.

In the role of expert, it is important to have knowledge and understanding about ageing, prevention, treatments and risk factors for most forthcoming problems in mental and physical wellbeing, housing, living conditions and social participation. Each professional must be aware of their own values about ageing and older people. In the role of communicator, the most important aspects found were related to treating older persons and their families with respect, taking time, empowering, being a good listener and coach. Collaboration is essential due to the increasing number of frail older people who live with multiple conditions that require either health or social care or, very

often, both. Collaboration with the informal carers of the older person is also required. The older person needs to be seen as a partner of the health and social care professional forming a collaborative relation for participatory decision-making. This is important when offering person-centred health and social care to the older person that their wish for independence is taken into account at all times.



CanMeds-Model

Older people's views on professional competences (WP 4)

Since the 1990's academics and professionals from different disciplines have dedicated much more attention to the rapid growth of the ageing population (Pike, 2013). From the perspective of education and training of professionals, higher education institutions play an essential role in the development of innovative expertise related to the promotion of positive ageing during later adulthood.

The main aim of WP4 was to explore older people's perceptions about the required and desired competences of professionals working with older people in different European countries. Empirical work was conducted in Austria, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, Turkey, and U.K. The partners selected a convenience sample of 16 participants (N=96) and used semi-structured interviews for data collection. A common interview script was followed and data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Four major themes were identified:

- Theme 1 emphasizes the importance of recognizing older people's individuality as well as their personal and social background.
- Theme 2 highlights the relevance of effective communication and positive relationships between professionals and service users.
- Theme 3 focuses on technical competence and expertise and team work.
- Vocation, commitment and ethical recommendations are the core of theme 4.

The development of these competencies has the potential to improve the quality of care delivered by health and social care professionals to older people.

Professional views on competences regarding the support of older people (WP5)

The main aim of this research was to collect information on the opinion of health and social care professionals about important competencies regarding the support of older people. Professionals taking part in the research were doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and social workers. The quantitative method used was based on the Caring Nurse – Patient Interactions Scale (CNPI-70).

Conclusion:

The professionals view showed that when caring for older people the relationship is central between care giver and older person is based on a humanistic-altruistic value system. In this system both sides accept each other without preconceptions; the care taker respects the older person

as an individual and shows interest in the person needing their help. The professionals believe that it is important to encourage older people to believe in themselves, to motivate them, to acknowledge their potential, to give hope, help and support when needed. Professionalism in care of the older person was noted as crucial. It includes purposeful and useful observation, needs assessment and analysis leading to the right decision and action. Health and social care professionals regard as important collaboration in a therapeutic team, risk assessment and the encouragement of autonomy. A central theme was accepting aging as a physiological process and not just as a disease.

“The older person needs to be seen as a partner of the health and social care professional. “

Attitudes of health and social care students towards older people and their perceptions of working with them (WP 6)

Background: Europe will confront a severe ageing population in the near future. Therefore, co-operation and innovation are essential in the education of health and social care professionals working with older people. In the past, it was assumed there was a correlation between positive attitudes towards older people and intention to work with older people. However researchers have challenged that assumption (Lui, Norman & While 2013, Boswell 2012) and yet there is limited research on perceptions of working with older people (Walther 2007).

Aim: To measure the attitudes of health and social care students towards older people, along with their perceptions of working with older people

Methodology: Undergraduate health and social care students (n=955) from 5 European countries in their final year of study completed a demographic questionnaire; Attitudes towards Older People Scale (Kogan 1966) and Students’ Perception of Working with Older People Scale (revised) (Nolan et al, 2006).

Findings: Respondents were generally very positive towards older people with few differences in mean scores between countries. Those with least experience with older people displayed more negative attitudes. However, increased experience of working with older people was not conclusively linked to positive attitudes. Significant relationships existed between positive experiences with older people prior to commencing an educational programme, and both positive attitudes to older people and disposition to work with older people. Indecision about the impact on their future careers of working with older people was common.

Conclusion: Indecision regarding working in this area suggests the need for the promotion of gerontology as a clear and appealing career path. The formulation of a competency framework for working with older people; the identification of innovative methods of education and training in gerontology, and the promotion of high quality ‘enriched’ care environments for older people should assist with this.

Motivating Health and Social Care students to choose a career in Gerontology through innovative education (WP 7)

Rationale: In Europe, demand for caregivers increases, but negative attitudes towards gerontology causes failure to recruit professionals. Research suggests that attitudes towards older people are shaped during education. That implies that learning experiences might contribute to the willingness to choose a professional career within Gerontology.

Aim: To identify innovative good practices in education for gerontology which could positively contribute to choose for a career in gerontology.

Methods: A template was developed, based on criteria for innovation and the Senses Framework as described by Nolan et al. (2002). The Senses Framework is an analytic instrument to interpret students' learning experiences. The template enabled the collection and assessment of teaching and learning methods in order to detect best practices for educating future

health care professionals. It was distributed to Higher Educational Institutions providing education in Gerontology in Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Croatia and Austria. Twenty-three templates were completed and analysed using Nvivo software, the Senses Framework and the criteria for innovation.

Results: Innovative teaching methods that take into account the needs of students, according to the senses model, were found and structured by Miller's educational model for competence-based learning. The selected best practices will be disseminated throughout Europe through publication.

Conclusion: This research, designed to share good practices and innovative approaches for learning, envisaged that the educational practices identified could positively influence students' attitudes and decisions about working with older people.

Development of the Core Competence Framework (WP8)

The main aim of the ELLAN project, is to develop an agreed European Core Competences Framework for working with older people, will be achieved through bringing together the results from the workpackages above, especially the results from the literature review about competencies for working with older people in health and social services (WP3) with the results from WP4, 5 and 6.

The Framework will outline competences for professionals working with older people in health and social services. Following the CanMeds Model, in total seven roles will be described: expert, communicator, collaborator, organizer, personal advocate, scholar and professional. Each of these role competences formulated will be presented in the form of performance indicators. The competence set will give indica-

tions for education, training and assessment.

From the literature findings information could be gained primarily for the roles of expert and communicator. It seems that professionals need these specific competences for working with older people. These findings are supported by the results from the research carried out on the views of older people (WP4).

This Framework will be verified using the Delphi method involving 24 experts from 8 countries.

Plans are in place to present the European Core Competence Framework for working with older people at the 23rd Nordic Congress on Gerontology in Tampere, Finland, June 2016.

Partners

- Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Liverpool John Moores University, UK
- Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna, Bulgaria
- Universidad de Granada, Spain
- University College Cork, Ireland
- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
- Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb, Croatia
- RĪGA STRADIŅŠ UNIVERSITY Liepāja branch, Latvia
- University of Maribor, Slovenia
- Hanzehogeschool Groningen Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands
- Kauno Kolegija / Kaunas University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania
- Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Poland
- Dokuz Eylül University, Turkey
- University Stefan cel Mare of Suceava, Romania
- Tartu Health Care College, Estonia
- Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal, Portugal
- Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland
- University of Applied Sciences Hamburg, Germany
- University College of Northern Denmark, Denmark
- Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
- Università' ta' Malta/ University of Malta, Malta
- Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
- Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary
- Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven, Belgium
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