Sexuality in the elderly: Knowledge and attitudes of professional caregivers

Key Words: Sexuality, Elderly, Knowledge, Attitudes, Formal Caregivers

Increased life expectancy; Modification of the structures and dynamics of family; Increasingly common solution for seniors who have health problems, living alone or with some level of dependence.

Institutionalization

Sexuality in the elderly still remains a taboo, especially in the institutional context. The demystifying contributes to improving the quality of life of older people.

to know the levels of knowledge and attitudes of the formal caregivers; Determine the factors that influence or determine these dimensions.

Demographic changes

Objective of this study

Study cross-sectional, quantitative, exploratory, comparative and correlational study

Sample convenience sample of 329 professional caregivers that work in nursery houses and others organizations (private and social) who provide care to older people

Instrument traduced version (with a pre-test) of the Aging Sexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale (ASKAS), which allowed the knowledge and attitudes measure about sexuality in the elderly (White, 1982).

RESULTS

There is a positive correlation between the knowledge levels and the attitudes and, generally, the caregivers present good knowledge levels and the attitudes about sexuality in the elderly are permissive.

There is a statistical significant difference between the qualified technicians (better knowledge and more permissive) and the auxiliary staff knowledge and more permissive attitudes.

The individuals with higher educational qualifications also present higher knowledge levels and more permissive attitudes.

About the educational regimes, the individuals that attended the ‘Novas Oportunidades’ regime present lower knowledge levels and less permissive attitudes.

None of subjects referred attending any kind of training or education in this area.

Single individuals present better knowledge levels and more permissive attitudes than the married ones.

The older individuals present less permissive attitudes as well as the more experienced caregivers.

No statistical differences were found between the different types of institutions.

knowledge is related with the attitudes about sexuality in the elderly. This topic remains a delicate subject for many of the individuals, especially for who work in an institutional context.

The sociodemographic profile, educational qualifications and professional experience have significant relationships with the knowledge and attitudes about sexuality in the elderly.

Conclusions

The results reinforce the need for formal training of caregivers in the area of sexuality in old age.

Education and training of these caregivers and a continuous research play a key role in the quality of life of the elders, in the quality of the provided services and in the recognition of the elder rights.