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Lived Experiences of Healthcare Providers in Enhancing Quality of Life and Managing Chronic Conditions

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Abstract

Healthcare providers play a vital role in supporting Austria's aging population, particularly older adults living with chronic conditions in long-term care facilities. This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of seven healthcare providers, including registered nurses, care assistants, and internationally educated professionals, using semi-structured interviews analyzed through Colaizzi's method. Findings revealed six key themes: providing holistic, person-centered care; building therapeutic relationships through compassion and trust; promoting quality of life; facing emotional and communication challenges; utilizing teamwork and coping strategies; and experiencing professional growth within multicultural environments. The study highlights that effective chronic care extends beyond medical treatment and relies on meaningful relationships, collaboration, and cultural understanding. Strengthening organizational support, cultural competence, and inclusive workplace practices may enhance both healthcare providers' well-being and residents' quality of life in long-term care.

Keywords: *Lived experiences of health care providers, Managing chronic condition, Quality of life, Long-term care, International health care providers*

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a growing global healthcare challenge, and Austria is experiencing a steady rise in older adults living with multiple chronic conditions. Illnesses such as dementia, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and COPD often affect not only physical health but also emotional well-being and quality of life, making long-term care facilities essential for continuous support (Leichsenring et al., 2021). In these settings, healthcare providers play a key role that goes beyond medical treatment, supporting residents' dignity, independence, and social and emotional well-being. Evidence shows that person-centered care improves quality of life and psychological outcomes by addressing individual needs and preferences (Davies et al., 2023; Cano et al., 2023; Lorber et al., 2025).

Austria's long-term care workforce is also increasingly multicultural, with internationally educated staff contributing significantly to care delivery. However, these providers often face challenges such as language barriers, cultural adaptation, and professional integration (Kamau et al., 2022). Despite existing research on chronic care and person-centered approaches, there is limited understanding of how healthcare providers themselves experience and make sense of their work in Austrian long-term care settings. This study addresses this gap

by exploring their lived experiences in supporting older adults with chronic conditions and enhancing their quality of life.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how healthcare providers describe and make sense of their lived experiences in enhancing patients' quality of life while managing chronic conditions. It aimed to understand the challenges they face in their daily work, how they contribute to residents' quality of life beyond medical care, and the approaches they find most effective for supporting residents' physical, emotional, and social well-being in a multicultural care environment.

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored the experiences of healthcare providers working in a long-term care facility in Austria, including registered nurses, care assistants, and internationally educated healthcare professionals caring for older adults with chronic conditions. It focused on their experiences, challenges, perceptions of quality of life, and the strategies they use in supporting residents. As the study involved only seven participants from a single facility, the findings reflect their individual perspectives and cannot be generalized to all healthcare providers working in Austrian long-term care settings.

Review of Related Literature

Existing literature emphasizes the importance of person-centered care in improving quality of life among older adults with chronic conditions. According to Cano et al. (2023), person-centered care promotes physical, emotional, and social well-being by recognizing residents as active participants in their care. Davies et al. (2023) similarly reported that individualized care contributes significantly to residents' dignity, autonomy, and overall satisfaction.

Healthcare providers frequently encounter emotional and professional challenges when caring for older adults with chronic illnesses. Compassion fatigue, emotional burden, and workload pressures have been identified as common concerns among long-term care workers (Leichsenring et al., 2021). At the same time, strong therapeutic relationships and meaningful interactions have been shown to improve both resident outcomes and healthcare provider satisfaction (Haugan, 2021).

Multicultural healthcare environments present additional opportunities and challenges. Debesay et al. (2022) found that culturally diverse healthcare teams contribute valuable perspectives and skills but may also encounter communication and integration difficulties. Kamau et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of organizational support and cultural competence programs in facilitating successful workforce integration.

The reviewed literature indicates a need for further research into healthcare providers' lived experiences in multicultural long-term care settings, particularly in Austria.

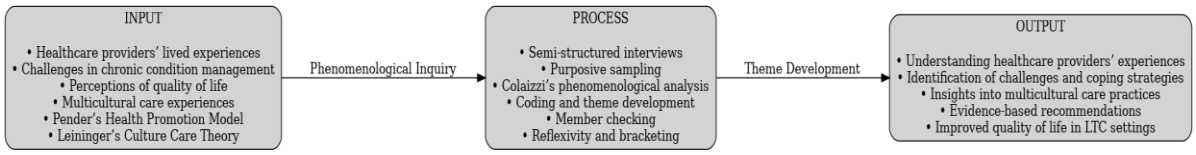
Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Pender's Health Promotion Model and Leininger's Culture Care Diversity and Universality Theory. Pender's model emphasizes health promotion, well-

being, and quality of life through supportive relationships and individualized care. Leininger's theory highlights the importance of culturally congruent care and understanding diverse cultural values and practices in healthcare delivery.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. The framework illustrates the relationship among the inputs (healthcare providers' lived experiences, challenges, perceptions of quality of life, multicultural care experiences, and guiding theories), the phenomenological research process, and the expected outputs related to understanding healthcare providers' experiences and improving *long-term care practice.*



Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design to explore healthcare providers' lived experiences of caring for older adults with chronic conditions. Phenomenology was chosen to understand how participants make sense of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Steps

The study began with a literature review on chronic disease management, quality of life, person-centered care, and multicultural healthcare. After ethical approval was obtained, participants were recruited through purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Colaizzi's method.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Seven healthcare providers participated in the study. Participants included registered nurses, care assistants, and internationally educated healthcare professionals with direct experience caring for older adults with chronic illnesses. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online and lasted approximately 30–60 minutes.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. Significant statements were extracted, meanings were formulated, and themes were developed. Member checking, reflexive journaling, and bracketing were used to enhance trustworthiness and credibility.

Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw were maintained throughout the study. Ethical principles were observed in accordance with established qualitative research standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis revealed six themes describing healthcare providers' lived experiences of enhancing quality of life while managing chronic conditions among older adults.

Theme 1: Providing Holistic and Person-Centered Care

Participants viewed care as extending beyond medical treatment to include emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual support. They emphasized individualized care and respecting residents' preferences and needs.

Theme 2: Building Therapeutic Relationships Through Compassion and Trust

Trust and compassion emerged as essential elements of effective care. Participants described therapeutic relationships as fundamental in supporting residents' emotional well-being and cooperation with care plans.

Theme 3: Understanding and Promoting Quality of Life

Participants associated quality of life with dignity, autonomy, comfort, and meaningful social interactions. Maintaining independence and preserving residents' sense of identity were viewed as important caregiving goals.

Theme 4: Encountering Emotional, Communication, and Professional Challenges

Healthcare providers reported emotional strain, communication difficulties, cultural adaptation challenges, and workload pressures. Despite these barriers, participants remained committed to providing high-quality care.

Theme 5: Using Teamwork, Communication, and Coping Strategies

Collaboration among healthcare professionals, family members, and residents was considered essential. Participants relied on teamwork, peer support, and reflective practices to address challenges and maintain resilience.

Theme 6: Experiencing Professional Growth and Multicultural Understanding

Participants described caregiving as personally transformative. Working in multicultural environments enhanced cultural awareness, empathy, and appreciation for diverse perspectives.

The findings support previous research highlighting the importance of person-centered care, therapeutic relationships, and cultural competence in long-term care settings (Davies et al., 2023; Debesay et al., 2022). Furthermore, the results demonstrate that healthcare providers play a critical role in promoting quality of life beyond clinical care through compassion, advocacy, and meaningful interpersonal relationships.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights that healthcare providers in Austrian long-term care facilities view caregiving as much more than meeting residents' physical health needs. Their experiences show that providing quality care involves building trusting relationships, offering emotional support, preserving dignity, and promoting the overall well-being of older adults living with chronic conditions. At the same time, caregivers face emotional, communication, and workload-related challenges that can affect both their well-being and their ability to deliver person-centered care. Despite these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of compassion, teamwork, family involvement, and cultural understanding in creating positive care experiences for residents.

The findings suggest that long-term care facilities should continue to strengthen person-centered care through ongoing education and professional development. Support for multicultural teams through cultural competence training, mentoring, and peer support may help staff manage workplace challenges more effectively. Organizations should also promote interdisciplinary collaboration and foster supportive work environments that prioritize both

staff well-being and resident care. Further research with larger samples across multiple settings is recommended to deepen understanding of healthcare providers' experiences and improve care quality and workforce sustainability.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT:

AI tools were used solely for language refinement, grammar, and organization. No AI tools were involved in data collection, analysis, or reporting. All research work, findings, interpretations, and conclusions are the researcher's sole responsibility.

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