

Seminar 4: *Planning for Dying in Old Age*

Social and Psychological Aspects of Dying in Old Age ESRC Seminar Series 2007 - 2008

Seminar 4: *Planning for Dying in Old Age* Edinburgh May 15th 2008

This final seminar was hosted by the Centre for the Older Person's Agenda at Queen Margaret University in collaboration with Lancaster University.

Aging, Dying and Public Health

Allan Kellehear, Professor of Sociology, University of Bath

Allan Kelleher presented the case for a systematic approach to addressing the issues raised by ageing and dying populations using a public health perspective. See attached presentation.

Open Space Forum

The Open Space forum in this final seminar drew upon the work of Forum Theatre. Working with an experienced facilitator (Gavin Crichton) from Edinburgh, eleven older people and staff from the Centre for the Older Person's Agenda at Queen Margaret University undertook a day's workshop prior to the seminar. The focus for the forum theatre was issues faced by older people planning for the future. From the issues identified three short scenes were devised and then presented to the full seminar. The issues of concern to the older adults present raised in the three scenes concerned future decisions about places of residence in two cases and a decision about donation of a body to medical science after death.

Background to Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is an interactive theatre form developed in the early 1970s by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian writer and theatre director. An audience is shown a short-ish play in which a central character (protagonist) encounters an oppression or obstacle which s/he is unable to overcome; the subject-matter will usually be something of immediate importance to the audience, often based on a shared life experience.

After this first presentation, there may be a brief discussion amongst the audience. The play is then restarted, usually from the beginning, and runs as before - but this time, whenever an audience member feels the protagonist might usefully have tried a different strategy, s/he can stop the action, take the protagonist's place, and try his or her idea. The other characters in the piece will remain in part and react as they feel their characters would react, on a bad day i.e. they will not make it easy for any new tactic to succeed; but if an idea works, the intervening spectator can win, the game is not rigged.

Through a session of Forum Theatre, many people can take the stage and present different possibilities. The event can therefore be a kind of theatrical debate, in which ideas and experiences are rehearsed and shared, generating new insights into sometimes problematic situations.

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Open Space in Action:



Perspectives on planning

The following two short presentations were given on work in progress by two PhD students (Gill Horne and Karen Watchman)

Discussion about preferences for the future: the views of people affected by lung cancer

Gill Horne (Clinical Services Lead, Rotherham Hospice and PhD student University of Nottingham)

Gill addressed issues of future discussions with people with lung cancer. Key issues that have been raised from this work in progress include:

- Prognostication
- Living in the present - coping with a shortened life
- Patients feel the doctor knows what's best
- Planning for death - but not dying
- Doctors and nurses communication about the future
- Patients' knowledge of cancer and its treatments

See attached presentation for further details.

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The appropriateness of different accommodation settings in the end of life care of people with Down's syndrome and dementia

Karen Watchman (PhD student, University of Edinburgh)

Karen presented her study which considers the end of life needs for people with Down's Syndrome and dementia with specific reference to people's experiences in different types of accommodation – their own home, small group living accommodation and a nursing home.

See attached presentation for further details.

Better Government for Older People

Pat Scrutton works for Better Government for Older People in Scotland. She gave a talk on networks and their role in bringing about change as they provide the opportunity to create a neutral space through appropriate leadership. See attached paper.

Rapporteur

Katherine Froggatt Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University

Katherine provided an overview of the whole seminar series its aims and structure. The following key issues were identified as cutting across all the seminars:

Interconnectedness

- Of issues
- Of research
- Of people

Scales of concern

- Micro/macro
- Foci – experiences and systems

Change and solutions required in:

- Policy
- Research
- Practice

See attached presentation for further details.