

The Ethical Resident's Conference
at Caritas Socialis
as a best-practice-example
how autonomy of people suffering from
dementia can be safeguarded

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**A medical revolution has extended
the life of our elder citizens
without providing the dignity and
security those later years
deserve.**

John F. Kennedy 1960

**What will happen to me in the time
before my death?**

**Is there a chance that they respect my
will, when I cannot express my
wishes and needs verbally?**

THE INITIAL SITUATION

- The advancement of medicine creates new opportunities.
- People stay at home longer and they need more help when they move into nursing homes.
- That means that there is not so much time for learning to know each other and to know the wishes and the needs.
- 80% of nursing home residents are suffering from dementia. Many of them are not able any more to verbalize their wishes.
- Palliative care and palliative medicine become increasingly more important.
- Ethical issues are increasing too.

Examples for ethical issues in nursing homes

- PEG tube or not?
- What is to be done, when a resident does not eat or drink? Can we accept that as the will of the person?
- Hospitalisation versus treatment in the nursing home?
- Resuscitation?

**We need
a setting
for discussing
ethical issues!**

Conditions for the Success of Ethical Resident's Conferences

- The involved players have to be part of the conference.
- The questions have to be easy because they must be understood by everyone in the conference.
- The structure has to be easy.
- There is no time for long preparation.
- Decisions made in a team are easier to be implemented.

Who should be part of the Ethical Conference?

- The resident and/or his relatives
- The nursing staff
- Apprentices
- Volunteers
- doctors
- psychologists
- a priest

Resident's Conferences in the Maieutic Care Concept

- The resident's conference is an essential tool of the maieutic care concept.
- The Socratic conversation is used.
- Since 2004 this kind of conference is regularly used.
- It is a familiar tool to everybody and therefore it makes sense to use it also for ethical issues.

Structure of Ethical Conferences

- Description of the situation? What is the question?
- Specification of the question?
- Alternatives and their positive and negative consequences?
- Summary of the positive and negative aspects and the consequences without any evaluation.
- Is there a resident's will? Do we know statements of the resident which can help us to decide in his stead? Do we know anything from his life history that can help us?
- What are the needs of the resident?
- How would the resident decide?
- Decision: The decision is an understanding about what is good in this special situation. This gives employees more security in the implementation of ethical decisions. Decisions are to be considered as preliminary and to be verified with every new question.

Benefits and Perspectives for the Future

- The tool has been used for about 3 years. It is our answer to ACP (Advance Care Planning).
- The treatment of ethical issues is part of the organizational culture.
- We participate in a comparative study.
- The approaches are discussed in a variety of ways. They are based on the presumed will of the residents.
- As a result, usually a palliative-sheet is written.
- Most residents can die “at home” (about 80%).
- Members of the family are involved.
- The employees participate in the decision – that gives them security.



Pflege- und
Sozialzentrum

Altern ist ein Naturereignis.
Der Umgang mit den Konsequenzen nicht.

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Wir danken den Fotografen Gabriele und Maria Fuchs. Foto: www.foto.com

Info: www.cs.or.at

**Thank you
for your attention!**

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