

CARE FOR THE FRAIL OLD

Dignity Center – Care for the Old, is a National and European center of competence, based on the project *A Dignified Old Age – A Lifetime Guarantee*, at Bergen Red Cross Nursing Home, Norway. Director: Stein Husebø



The Dignity Center's main goal is to ensure that elderly, in their final, frail stage of life, are met with care, respect, social integration and the essential proficiency. Our aim is to describe and implement strategies that provide the elderly with the best possible opportunities to health, autonomy, care, quality of life and dignity in their last years of life.

This includes:

- *information*
- *education and training of medical and caring staff, patients and their families*
- *networking*
- *collaborative projects that promote similar goals*

THE ISSUE

The greatest social-political challenge facing the industrial countries throughout the next decades will be to make sure that the large and dramatically increasing group of elderly people receives a dignified fulfilment of their lives. *By the year 2050, most European countries will experience that the number of citizens over the age of 65 increases with 70%, the number of 80 year-olds with 100%, and the number of 90 year-olds with more than 1000%.*

A person's vulnerability increases as the elderly become ill and dependent on others' help and understanding and have to let go of their self determination (autonomy). For many older people, especially patients suffering from dementia, the greatest challenge will be the dependence on others to "read" and respect their thoughts, feelings, and needs – with basic respect for their needs and dignity.

TEACH THE TEACHERS

Our training program, Teach the teachers, has its main focus on palliative care and long term care of frail old. Participants are nurses, nurse assistants, physicians and other professionals caring for older people in nursing homes and the community. They are recruited nationally. The program includes four seminars in one year, each over a three day period. The participants commit themselves to establish a local training program in their own institution or municipality, after our four teaching seminars. They receive comprehensive support and teaching material for their local projects. Our aim is to develop, test and publish a model for implementation of competence in palliative care focusing on frail elderly persons in their home or in long-term care facilities.

COORDINATORS OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Bergen Red Cross Nursing Home has more than 40 volunteers. They contribute to a variety of physical and psychosocial activities, giving the patients hope and quality of life. The need for good organized voluntary services for frail old people in all nursing homes and municipalities is imminent. In a project with close collaboration to Red Cross and other organisations with major experience with volunteers, we plan a national education program for the coordinators of voluntary projects: Old people help old people.



INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

The Dignity Center is the initiator and leader in a European network in which the professional communities exchange experiences, projects, care models, and possibilities for practicing palliative care for the frail old. Participants in the network include universities and institutions in Prague, Vienna, Graz, Maastricht and Cardiff. The community promotes the network, which is effective in Europe, especially Germany and Austria.

www.dignityold.com

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dignity Center – Care for the Old
c/o Bergen Red Cross Nursing Home
Ellerhusensvei 35, N-5043 Bergen, Norway
Phone: 0047 55 39 77 41
www.verdighetsenteret.no

THE FOUNDERS:

Norwegian Red Cross
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