

REDUCING RISK OR PROVIDING SAFETY?

BY BRENDA HAPPELL

When Leonie Clancy began her PhD on assessing risks in aged mental health services, she didn't realise how controversial this concept of risk would be. During her interviews with clinicians, Leonie recognised a strong awareness of risk and its impact on older people. But often clinicians interpreted and responded to risk without considering it in a risk framework.

Assessing risk had a degree of uncertainty as clinicians believed that older people always presented with a heightened level of risk. The challenge for clinicians was to support consumers, striving towards the best possible outcome. Organisational support for clinicians and consumers was seen as paramount.

Safety for consumers and carers was described by clinicians as providing comfort and support in a trusting environment. Potential threats to safety occurred when older people were out of their own environment and among strangers, loss of power, being with other people whose illnesses frightened them, being with people of the opposite gender and loss of independence.

Many consumer and carer participants described the experience of care as traumatising, while the quality of care was not questioned, the impact of admission on consumers and their families was traumatic. Following each admission people often didn't return to their preadmission level of functioning. Families felt left out of the care for their loved ones. A focus on the rights for consumers and carers in decision making regarding care was seen as requiring a greater emphasis.

One strength of the service was having a contact person within the service for support; this was seen as very helpful. The main weaknesses appeared to centre on consumers and carers feeling disempowered and unsupported; psychiatry was described as a "very grey area that leaves people feeling threatened and fearful".

Major suggestions for improvement to current practice related to increased consultation with families, to engage, learn from each other and to develop partnerships in care.

LEONIE CLANCY IS COMPLETING HER PHD AT CQUINIVERSITY AUSTRALIA UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROFESSOR BRENDA HAPPELL AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LORNA MOXHAM.



Exciting opportunities at The Eden Alternative

BY SONYA BROWNIE

The Eden Alternative in Oz and NZ Ltd. celebrates ten years since the opening of the first facility in Australia in 2010. The Eden Alternative is an innovative approach to long-term care, based on a set of ten principles, developed by US geriatrician Dr William Thomas, designed to combat the main causes of suffering in aged care residents, namely boredom, loneliness and helplessness. The Eden Alternative is a not-for-profit organisation that shifts the focus from a medical approach of seeing long-term residential care as a place of treatment to environments for older people to construct and pursue meaningful lives.

Eden in Oz and NZ is thriving with around 31 residential aged care facilities actively engaged in implementing the Eden Alternative to improve the lives of residents and nursing staff. These facilities are supportive and caring environments enlivened by close and continuing contact with children, companion pets and flourishing indoor and outdoor gardens, all designed to create a vibrant "human habitat" that nourishes the human spirit. There is agreement in the literature that facilities that embrace the Eden Alternative philosophy report significant reductions in the use of medication among residents, decreases in

infection rates among residents, decreases in nursing staff turnover, and increases in staff job satisfaction and self-esteem of both staff and residents.

This year the Eden Alternative in Oz and NZ Ltd. will formalise a Memorandum of Understanding with Southern Cross University in NSW to begin the process of evaluating the benefits to both residents and nursing staff in Eden Alternative aged care facilities around Australia.

This partnership will provide opportunities for nurses to be involved in the evaluation process. Undergraduate nurses are welcome to undertake clinical placements in Eden Alternative facilities. For more information email Cathy Noakes-Meyer, Chair of Eden in Oz and NZ (cathmac50@bigpond.com), or Sonya Brownie, academic, Southern Cross University (sonya.brownie@scu.edu.au).

DR SONYA BROWNIE IS COURSE COORDINATOR MASTER OF CLINICAL SCIENCE, BACHELOR OF AGEING IN THE COMMUNITY AT SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY IN NSW.

39

Copyright of Australian Nursing Journal is the property of Australian Nursing Federation and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.