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Implementing the Leadership Theory in Preparation of Multi-disciplinary Geriatric Teams for Treating Patients with Severe Disfiguration

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Purpose

The Leadership theory is widely used in bussiness organizations. We implemented concepts of Group Empowerment, Reframing, and Leadership Modeling into a process of multidisciplinary team (MDT) training. The goal was to prepare MDT in a geriatric ward to cope with care of a patient suffering from Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) with severe disfiguration, while overcoming their refusal to treat this patient.

Methods:

A 62 year old man with severe facial SCC was addmitted to the geriatric ward. Upon admission, only his eyes and upper lip could be identified in his face. The MDT refused to treat him. The psychologist (TS) initiated a process of 12 group meetings (3 hours each) based on the Leadership theory, implementing tools of Personal Example, Reframing and Group Empowerment. 17 MDT members attended the meetings and filled questionnaires: before the intervention, following 4 meetings, 8 meetings, one month and four months after the process. It assessed attitude towards the process, the patient, the hospital and their jobs.

Results:

Analysis of questionnaires revealed a positive correlation between time and the following parameters: positive image of the patient, the hospital, job ranking and self esteem. Ranking of the process was heighest 4 months after it's termination. The change in team's attitude towards the patient was the most significant: from complete refusal to treat this patient initially, 4 months after the process, 65% of the team members were regarding him as "a family relative" or "a friend".

Conclusions:

Leadership theory models may serve as effective tools for preparing multidisciplinary teams in long-term care facilities, to cope with difficult patients. Through a group process, team members can significantly improve their attitude towards "difficult to treat" patient, while contributing to increase their own self esteem, job ranking and image of their institute.