

Attitude of professional caregivers towards apathy in nursing home residents with dementia

Citation for published version (APA):

Hofenk, D., Leontjevas, R., Reijnders, J. S. A. M., Plouvier, A., Nijsten, J. M. H., & Gerritsen, D. L. (2023). *Attitude of professional caregivers towards apathy in nursing home residents with dementia: A mixed methods study into the effect of a training in professional caregivers*. Abstract from 33rd Alzheimer Europe Conference, Helsinki, Finland.

Document status and date:

Published: 01/10/2023

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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Abstract Details

Title: **Attitude of professional caregivers towards apathy in nursing home residents with dementia: A mixed methods study into the effect of a training in professional caregivers**

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Session: POS3. New opportunities in care - Valo-Säde-Kajo, 17/10/2023, 10:00 - 15:45

Objectives: Apathy in nursing home residents with dementia is associated with negative outcomes such as poor quality of life and increased mortality. Because professional caregivers play a crucial role in activating residents, this mixed methods study investigated the effect of a 2 hour onsite training on the attitude of professional caregivers towards apathy in dementia.

Methods: Seventy-one professional caregivers in two Dutch nursing homes completed a questionnaire before, at the end of and five weeks after the training. The training was developed for the Shared Action for Breaking through Apathy (SABA) intervention. To measure attitude, we modified an existing instrument for caregivers' attitude towards depression. The questionnaire contained statements measuring attitude, and open questions about barriers and facilitators experienced by professional caregivers in caring for residents with apathy in dementia.

Results: Two subscales (knowledge, and behaviour/affect) were constructed based on the Principal Component Analysis of the modified attitude scale. Multilevel analyses accounting for repeated measurements showed a strong improvement in knowledge after the training. Although weaker, this remained significant after 5 weeks. Directly after the training, the effect on behaviour/affect was not significant, but that was statistically and clinically significant after 5 weeks. Qualitative analyses revealed organizational, and personal aspects concerning both caregivers and residents that may improve or impede apathy management on psychogeriatric units. Examples of barriers are lack of time and knowledge. Facilitators can be personal characteristics as humor and empathy.

Conclusions: The study showed that it is possible to improve attitude of professional caregivers towards apathy in dementia by a 2 hour training of SABA. The modified questionnaire was sensitive to changes in attitude due to the training. Follow-up studies with control groups and measurements in residents are recommended.

Keywords: apathy, attitude, dementia, training, caregivers

