

Descriptions of Home: Older Adult Male Caregivers' Experiences

Meredith Berk, OTS

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill | Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy



Introduction

- Continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) have become a leading style of community-based living for older adults^{1,2}
- Male caregivers have unique perspectives and experiences^{3,4}
- Research has primarily focused on descriptions of home immediately following a transition to a CCRC
- Male perspectives are minimally represented within literature

Study Aim

This project aimed to learn more about how male caregivers describe their sense of home after their significant other moves to a higher level of care at their continuing care retirement community.

Methods

- Qualitative descriptive approach
- Purposive sampling
- Semi-structured interviews with two older adult male caregivers
- Transactional theoretical approach
- Qualitative content analysis⁵

Results

"I have my place and she hers. That is just how our lives are now. . . but we are still one."

Home is situated within the context of a relationship

"That quilt that we bought when we came down here. She remembers that. But the rest of the cottage. . . seems totally strange to her."

Context of a CCRC redefines home

"We felt that home was when we were together more than anything else."

Objects create a continuity of home

Discussion

- The intentionality of choosing a CCRC was related to identifying an atmosphere in which they could establish a sense of home within the larger CCRC community
- Home has traditionally been contextualized as a physical space. However, participants felt little connection to home as a physical location
- Participants' descriptions of home aligned with literature related to the importance of objects in continuing a sense of home. Although objects that were meaningful were items that they and their wives jointly ascribed meaning to

Conclusion & Implications

Occupational therapists working with older adult male caregivers should consider the multilayered descriptions of home, as well as the role their spouse has in their construction of home

References

1. Dobbs-Kepper, D., & Chapin, R. (2001). Aging in place in assisted living: Philosophy versus policy. *The Gerontological Society of America, 41*(1), 43-50.
2. Harris-Kojetin, L., Sengupta, M., Park-Lee, E., Valverde, R., Caffrey, C., Rome, V., & Lendon, J. (2016). Long-term care providers and services users in the United States: Data from the national study of long-term care providers. *National Center for Health Statistics: Vital Health Statistics, 3*(43).
3. Russell, R. (2004). Social networks among elderly men caregivers. *Journal of Men's Studies, 13*(1), 121.
4. Knutsen, H., & Råholm, M-B. (2009). The dialectic movement between suffering and reconciliation: Male caregivers' experience of caring for their wives suffering from dementia. *International Journal of Human Caring, 13*(4). doi: 10.20467/1091-5710.13.4.50
5. Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.