

VSD Vorsorgedialog® - a nationwide instrument for advance care planning in nursing homes in Austria

Introduction

“VSD Vorsorgedialog” (VSD) is a new nationwide instrument for advance care planning and end-of-life decisions in nursing homes in Austria. Over a process of two years, the instrument was developed and discussed and ultimately gained acceptance of all stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Medical Association, Federation of Social Insurance Institutions). It is now enshrined in Austrian law.

VSD is an ongoing communication process between residents, their families, nurses and physicians. They talk about the resident’s needs and expectations for a good life as well as for a dignified end of life. The results are documented and regularly re-evaluated. If a resident is not able to communicate her or his will, a VSD-conversation offers the opportunity to ascertain the resident’s presumed will.

Method

A quantitative and qualitative survey is conducted in participating nursing homes during the nationwide pilot phase (1.1.2017–31.12.2020). In September 2018, an interim analysis of the quantitative data of four nursing homes, which had been offering VSD-conversations for 6.7 months on average, was carried out.

Results

During the survey period, 95 VSD-conversations were conducted. In 27 of those, the residents expressed their needs and expectations personally. 42 investigated the resident’s presumed will and in 14 VSD-conversations, the resident’s ability to make judgements couldn’t be determined (missing data: x=12). On average, a VSD-conversation lasted 46 minutes, nurses’ preparation and follow-up took 60 minutes. 78 emergency information sheets were filled out. In 20 emergency situations the staff acted in accordance with the resident’s will, in one emergency situation they didn’t act in accordance with it.

Conclusions

The VSD is a suitable instrument not only to ascertain the resident’s will, but also the resident’s presumed will. The staff is able to act in accordance with the residents’ needs and expectations in emergency situations.

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