

## TITLE

“Providing and utilisation of domestic help and support services for people suffering from dementia”

## ABSTRACT

Due to the growing proportion of the elderly in the population, we are currently seeing a rapid rise in the number of dementia sufferers. The vast majority are cared for and nursed at home by their relatives. Because health care resources within the family are expected to become ever scarcer in future, there will be a growing demand for professional assistance and outpatient nursing services to be integrated in the domestic care of dementia sufferers. Although the availability of non-residential and day-care treatment in the fields of diagnostics, advice, help and care is improving, current studies nevertheless show that there is often insufficient additional support provided at home to ensure a stable situation. The reasons for this have not yet been examined in detail, however. For instance, most of the scientific findings relate purely to the causes brought about by the target group itself. In other words, the gaps in care provision are put down to barriers to sufferers and their families requesting help, with personal characteristics or features of the care dyad, resources and requirements being used to explain the situation. In some cases, the causes are also put down to the supply structure itself. The role played by GPs as the main intermediaries for such help is, however, generally neglected in these studies.

The theoretical part of this paper first takes an in-depth look at empirical findings on the predictors of claiming help and assistance, which are systematized on the basis of two framework models (*Andersen & Newman, 1973; Diwan & Moriarty; 1995*).

The empirical part of the study, which primarily looks at the role of GPs, as the intermediaries of non-pharmacological assistance, is based on a multidisciplinary study in a municipal care network for dementia sufferers (Forum Demenz Wiesbaden). The survey of providers encompassed a total of 98 GPs, consultants and providers of advice and support. The survey analysed their own role in providing care for dementia patients, areas they perceive as problematic and statements on the communication and cooperation between the various actors in the field of assistance for the elderly and the healthcare system. This survey revealed some enormous differences in the resources available for dementia sufferers and behaviour patterns amongst GPs, which in turn have an impact on the quality of the service they provide in this respect.

Finally, implications for the provision of care to dementia sufferers are derived from the various parts of the study and measures to improve the doctor-patient relationship (at the microscopic level), the professional care (at the mesoscopic level) and towns and municipalities, i.e. the macroscopic level, are developed.

Keywords: *Dementia - utilisation – service - support – GP*