POSTER ABSTRACT

Empowercare: Development and evaluation of a competency-framework and educational course to teach community-based professionals how to empower vulnerable community residents.

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Background: Communities are increasingly seen as the preferred context to organize care and interprofessional collaboration. The primary goal of community-based care is to enable people to live at home longer, delaying or preventing hospitalization of (vulnerable) people by focusing on organizing care in a familiar environment which benefits both physical and mental wellbeing. Community-based care demands that people with a need for care and support are included as equal partners in deciding what works best, during which their needs, preferences, and strengths are seen as the building blocks of delivered care. This shift from a system based on specialized and supply-driven care to community-based care brings new challenges, and a new role and set of competencies for all professionals involved. 'Empowerment' seems to be a key concept when it comes to shaping these new care perspectives and practices. More specifically, professionals need to take on an empowering attitude, supporting the active participation and the acquisition of skills of the (vulnerable) person, whilst focusing on needs and strengths. However, the competencies needed to change perspectives and take on an empowering attitude have not yet sufficiently found their way to day-to-day care practices. In the context of the Interreg2Seas Empowercare project, we have tackled this issue by designing and evaluating an online module and neighbourhood workshops to teach professionals what community-based empowerment entails and how to implement it in daily practice.

Method: A literature review and one-on-one interviews with community-based professionals who have acquired an expertise in community-based empowerment were conducted to build a competency framework and to inform the development of an educational course on 'community-based empowerment', consisting of an e-learning, face-to-face workshops with case interivsions, in-field exercises, and podcasts. The course was piloted and evaluated in four communities in Flanders, Belgium.

Target group: The course is intended for professionals from health and social care who are active in primary care and/or community care, that work with (vulnerable) community residents, and who work in the same neighbourhood.

Evaluation: Feedback and input on the structure and content of the course was obtained from participants throughout and after the course. Participants were asked to fill out questionnaires on self-efficacy and implementation of community-based empowerment competencies. The qualitative data revealed that participants were overall very satisfied with the course. Participants specifically liked the blended nature of the course, and the opportunity to connect with community-based professionals from the same neighbourhood during the face-to-face workshops. Response on the questionnaires was too low to draw conclusions based on quantitative data.

Next steps: The course is currently being optimized based on feedback and will be tested in four new communities based in the province of Antwerp, Belgium. More specifically, the course mainly delt with competencies needed to obtain an empowering attitude but lacked in-depth content on how to implement the competencies in community-based care and how to establish sustainable collaboration between community-based professionals.