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Relocation Stress Syndrome and Associated Health Outcomes among Older Persons Living in Long-Term Care Facilities: Findings from a Systematic Literature Review

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Background

Relocation stress syndrome was officially recognised as a nursing diagnosis in 1992; however, the phenomenon had been documented for at least 70 years. In Western literature, high mortality rates and other deleterious effects of relocation on older person populations were described as early as the 1960s.

In Malta, there is a dearth of research and data on the impact of relocation stress on older persons transitioning to local long-term care facilities. This is probably due to the fact that

modern long-term care for older persons was only established relatively recently, in the 1990s. This lack of information creates a significant knowledge gap when it comes to understanding how relocation affects the older persons' well-being and adjustment to their new living environment.

Objective

The aim of this systematic literature review is to examine relocation stress and the associated health outcomes in older persons following a move to a long-term care facility. Another aim is to explore the relationship between relocation stress, the older persons' involvement in decision-making, and other demographic factors

Methods

A systematic search was carried out between September 2023 and August 2024, in order to identify peer-reviewed studies reporting on relocation to long-term care. Articles were identified by keyword searches of electronic databases, as well as through a search of references of relevant articles. Articles published from 2000 to date were included for analysis.

Conclusion

The sector of long-term care for older persons has developed and evolved very rapidly in Malta over the last 2 decades. There is now an urgent need to raise awareness of the health implications of relocation. It is hoped that this systematic literature review will facilitate and inform local decision-making and policy regarding care transitions and, most importantly, the safeguarding of older persons' health.