



Newsletter

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TRAINING FOR TRAINERS

Learning how to implement the “Listen to my story” workshops

In May 2021 the whole partnership, under the leadership of Alzheimer Hellas, has been involved in a three-days training session aimed to transfer knowledge and skills to implement in all countries the narration-based workshops for informal carers originally developed in Greece.

Alzheimer Hellas, developed a set of guidelines combining the experience gained by implementing similar workshops within the organization but also taking into account the results of **“Tell me about you”** report of family members' needs and experiences of caring role developed in the framework of the previous SINCALA project. Indeed, the Caregivers Unit of Greek Association of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (Alzheimer Hellas) in Thessaloniki, Greece developed a support group using poetry and literature as stimuli and narration and expressive writing as creative tools to help families of people with dementia to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences and make sense of their situation. Caregivers use literature and poetry to exchange thoughts and experiences, to answer some of their questions about dementia and caregiving and in the end have a new point of view concerning their role.

The model is also based on previous studies showing that the use of poetry reading and written emotional expression can have psychological benefits for caregivers (Kidd et al, 2011; Swinnen, 2014; Butcher et al, 2016).

During the training, facilitators from partners' organizations were trained to the application and adaptation of this model, but were also offered the opportunity to test on themselves the feelings and the experience connected with it. All participants were enthusiastic about the approach and shared that they were looking forward to implement it at national level.

THE PROJECT

In Europe, 80% of all chronically ill people are taken care of by informal carers, that is people (usually family members) who provide unpaid care outside of a professional or formal framework. While caring for a loved one can be a source of great personal satisfaction, however it might also create challenges because of care burden, stress, fatigue and reconciliation issues. Therefore, a functional relationship among caregivers and care recipient needs to be supported. Furthermore, people belonging to different age groups and with different kinships to the care-recipient (young/adult children, grandchildren, spouses) can have different experiences and perspective on the burden of care, so it is necessary to take all of them into account in order to be able to provide comprehensive and effective support. The Erasmus+ funded “SINCALA - INFORMAL CARERS: A WHOLE-FAMILY & LIFECOURSE APPROACH” programme will tackle these challenges by providing an intervention programme based on therapeutic narrative that can be used by professionals working with family carers to support them build resilience to maintain capacity to care.

THE “LISTEN TO MY STORY” WORKSHOPS

Using literature to elicit and share emotions related with caregiving

The model is based on sessions of approximately 90 minutes each, all with a similar structure: the group first reads a text literature or poem selected by the professionals. Then, each participant talks about the thoughts and feelings that arise from reading spontaneously, with encouragement not to focus on a literature analysis. There is a big variety of feelings that can arise (for example sadness, anger, happiness, stress, satisfaction), depending on the stimulus, on previous life experiences or on the present psychological state of each participant. After spontaneous sharing, facilitators ask caregivers to try to associate arising feelings with something they have felt or experienced in their everyday life with their patient with dementia. The next step is for caregivers to write down their own stories, giving voice to their thoughts and emotions and using expressive and spontaneous writing techniques. At the end of each session, caregivers willing to do this, read their stories to the group.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The SINCALA partnership is now working on two main fronts:

- on one hand each partner will have the responsibility to pilot the “Listen to my story” workshops at national level targeting three dedicated groups of carers: spouses, adult children and grand-children/young carers.
- In parallel, partners – under the coordination of lead partner UWAH – are completing another intellectual output, i. e. a guide for facilitators which will guide the narration-based workshops to help them identify and address issues that emerge among families, such as cases of caregiver burnout, elder abuse or other forms of domestic violence.

To be updated on our progresses visit: <https://sincala.eu/>

THE PARTNERSHIP

The educational programme consists of a partnership between non-governmental organisations namely:

- Women's Support and Information Centre (Estonia), coordinator of the consortium, together with
- The University of Tartu (Estonia)
- Union of Women Associations of Heraklion Greece)
- Alzheimer Hellas (Greece)
- Anziani e non solo (Italy)
- CASO50+ Centro de Atendimento e Servicos 50+, Associacao (Portugal)
- Spominčica - Alzheimer Slovenija (Slovenia).



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