

Working towards more carer friendly societies via responsive research, policy and practice

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Background

There are approximately 1.3 million carers in Sweden and they provide the bulk of the care to home-dwelling frail, older and/or disabled people. Informal carers are family members, neighbours and/or friends who provide help, support and/or care to a relative/significant other on a regular basis. Whilst many carers regard caring as meaningful, nevertheless there are known risks to carers providing more intensive amounts of care, in terms of poorer mental and physical health, social isolation and being financially worse off.

With the move towards people-centred, integrated care systems, it is important that carers and the wider family/informal care networks are recognised and both empowered and supported in their role, according to their individual needs and preferences. In this regard, community health nurses play a central role in promoting carer health.

The Swedish Family Care Competence Centre (Nka) is a national centre of excellence in the field of informal care whose mission is to strengthen the evidence concerning effective ways of supporting carers. The Carers, Care and Caring Research Group (CCCG) at Linnaeus University (LNU) acts as the research arm of Nka. In this way, research results are taken up by Nka and widely disseminated to ensure they reach frontline practitioners and decision makers, with the aim of improving the situation of informal carers and the people they care for.

Aim of the study

The presentation will highlight the work of Nka/CCCG, giving examples of current/recently completed projects of relevance to the field of community health nursing.

Methods

Main methods employed by the ICCCG/Nka will be presented, with reference to examples of participatory ways of working to ensure the active involvement of carers and main stakeholder groups (health and social care practitioners, decision makers, policy makers, civil society, researchers) in the ongoing work.

Results

Core themes arising from the projects will be presented, namely:

- i) Promoting young carers' mental health and wellbeing
- ii) Balancing paid work with informal care among adult carers
- iii) Reciprocal caring relationships in later life

Conclusions

Concluding remarks will include the main lessons learned by the LNU/Nka team in their efforts to work towards more sustainable, carer friendly community care.