



- Our ability to interact and form meaningful relations with other

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Social health and dementia: a European consensus on the operationalization of the concept and directions for research and practice

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Covid-19

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- Social distancing as general accepted preventive measure during acute COVID-19 pandemic
 - Reduce interaction among people / reduce transmission
- Adverse impact of social distancing in older people
 - In itself harmful to health, especially in dementia
- Social isolation and loneliness have been related to:
 - Increased prevalence of vascular and neurological diseases
 - Mortality
 - Increased cognitive impairment

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I.v.m. verscherpte maatregelen rondom
het Corona Virus, is het niet toegestaan
bezoek te ontvangen.
Ook geen familie en partners!
Dit is een landelijke maatregel i.o. van
het RIVM

Alle verpleeghuizen waren bezoekers in strijd
tegen coronavirus

Nursing homes closed nationally in
many countries for visitors

Acute phase, emergency measure



▲ Verpleeghuis dicht corona © PZC

Ban for visitors

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- Highly restrictive measure
- Enormous impact on residents
- Pose dilemma for staff
- Creative alternatives
 - E.g. window visiting, separate container
- BUT serious challenge to residents' autonomy
- Primary data lacking



Use of video calling

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- Pilot study among 64 family caregivers of residents in nursing homes in the Netherlands

Baan et al., 2020

- Ability to see each other seen as positive, BUT
 - During video call, many felt the need to comfort their relative
 - Confronted with deteriorated health
 - Seeing residents cry during video call
 - Support nursing home highly warranted
 - Lack of privacy (not being alone with your relative)



Visiting nursing homes

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ELSEVIER

JAMDA

journal homepage: www.jamda.com

Original Study

Allowing Visitors Back in the Nursing Home During the COVID-19 Crisis: A Dutch National Study Into First Experiences and Impact on Well-Being



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Cautiously opening doors

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- Two months after ban in the NL, measures to cautiously allowing visitors
- National pilot project in 26 nursing homes
 - Start date: May 11th 2020
- Specific guideline for allowing visitors
 - Developed by stakeholders in the field
 - Professional organizations for old age medicine, psychologists, nurses
 - Client representative organization, Alzheimer's Society
 - Sector organization for nursing homes
 - Guideline is directive, not mandatory
 - Depending on the local context



Key points Guideline - Visitors

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- 1 designated visitor allowed per residents
- Make agreements with nursing home on frequency and duration of visits. Visitors are spread throughout the day and week
- Visits take place at 1.5m (i.e. 5 feet) distance
 - including from staff and other residents
 - hygiene measures at entrance
- Visitors should be free from COVID-19 symptoms
- Visitors are obliged to wear a protective mouth mask for visiting residents who are difficult to instruct (e.g. with dementia)

Key points - Organization

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- Should observe regulations and keep perspective on well-being
- Sufficient protective equipment, thermometer assessment and sufficient applications
- Strict hygiene protocol
- Sufficient staffing
- Sufficient test capacity by Local Health Authority



Impact on well-being

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- Family members and residents were in general very emotional when seeing each other after such a long time
 - Personal visits perceived as huge added value over other solutions
- Physical contact with each other was missed
- Opportunity to go outside was missed

“It was an emotion reunion. Mister J. did not recognize his son as they had not seen each other for 10 weeks...He was crying and could not understand how he could forget about his son. For the son this was difficult too” Team leader, Nursing Home 26

Need for physical contact

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“My father longs for physical contact. A hug, a gentle stroke on the head, or a hand on his shoulder. From a moment being physical, from one loved one to another. I found that difficult”

Daughter , father lives in the nursing home

“It was an outburst, after not seeing each other for 8 weeks. It felt like back during our courting days”

Wife, husband lives in the nursing homes

“This [lockdown during COVID-19] is worse than the war...at least we were together then but now I am totally alone”

Male residents, living in a nursing home

Impact on well-being

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- All nursing homes were unanimously positive about visits

“The visits have a positive influence. Drinking a cup of coffee together, being together in the same space without a screen in between. It seems a small step, but it feels as a giant emotional step.” Manager, Nursing Home 17

“A staff member cannot replace a family member...Since our residents know that they are allowed to receive a visitor again, they are in a different mood and have something to look forward to again.” Manager, Nursing Home 6”



COVID-19 infections

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- No new COVID-19 infections were reported 3 weeks after visitors were allowed.
 - In comparison: 732 new cases reported in nursing homes during the same period in the Netherlands

Source: Verenso

Follow-up 4 weeks later

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- Survey among 76 nursing homes (26 + additional 50)
- First week: visits very emotional
- Respondents feel negative impact of a ban for visitors
 - Loneliness and effects on functioning of residents
 - Quicker deterioration perceived by family
- After 3 weeks: family needs expansion of regulations
 - Allowing more than 1 visitor
 - More flexibility in time and frequency of visit
 - Going outside

Follow-up 4 weeks later

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- Staff experiences anxiety for COVID-19 outbreak
- Concerns of staff for long-term implementation of guidelines
 - High workload with organizing, planning and regulating visits
- Different regulations among nursing homes in a similar region
 - Difficult for family caregivers



Current situation

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- June 15th: National guidelines were less restrictive, e.g. more than 1 designated visitor for all residents, walking outside
- July 1st: Nursing homes open as usual
- Lessons learned:
 - Perhaps the measures were too restrictive for a too long period
 - Reported cases from practice of death by loneliness
 - Why were nursing homes lagging behind on hospitals regarding PPE supply?
- Current debate of infection prevention vs. quality of life

Conclusion

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- A general ban for visitors is not necessary and may do more harm than good for older people living in nursing homes
- Residents should have a voice and be heard
- Risk management plan of both acute and chronic threats for quality of life of residents in nursing homes
- Dignity at the end-of life



Partners:

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International Psychogeriatric Association
Better Mental Health for Older People