

Using story dialogue method, inspired by the PAR approach, to identify and develop problem areas in food distribution to elderly people living at home in five municipalities in Sweden

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The number of elderly people in Sweden is increasing and as a result there is a heightened need for assistance to distribute food to the elderly from public home care. Findings from international research as well as from Sweden show that food distribution as a single intervention involves various professional groups. It indicated that there is a lack of knowledge in public home care about food distribution to elderly living in their own homes. A network for research and development of nutrition and eating used the story dialogue method, inspired by the PAR approach, to identify and develop practical issues in the food distribution process. Concrete stories from every day practice of the various professional groups were used as “triggers” when asking probing questions in a dialogical and structured form. The findings were that food distribution was seen as a complex system that included three interconnected issues: the organisation of work, the professional’s competence in nutrition and the collaboration between various professional groups. To obtain good quality in food distribution to the elderly, routines and protocols pertaining to all these issues need to be developed. Thus, when developing the food distribution, it is essential that the system, which involves routines and protocols, also includes a system of following up the results of the entire support intervention. To achieve a change, the core problem needs to be clarified. When the issues are complex the solutions need to consider the whole picture rather than its parts. To tell stories from every day practice, and to systematically reflect and analyse them in professional groups may generate enhanced understanding as well as being a starting point to change the process of food distribution practice.

The short paper and presentation, on how to identify the practical issues involved and what can be done to create a receptive context for change, would fit in the fourth key theme of the congress.

Keywords: food distribution, elderly persons, living at home, professionals, public home care, story dialogue method