

# Dignity for the Frail Old

European Conference Sept. 2. – 5. 2010  
Bergen, Norway



## **FROM DILEMMAS TO SOLUTIONS**

A given social-political challenge for the world throughout the next decades will be the ageing of populations and communities. A major concern is the position of frail and vulnerable older people. Their dignity is at stake today and in the future.

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## THE ISSUE:

### TO RECEIVE DIGNIFIED CARE IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

By the year 2050, most European countries will experience increases of 100% in the number of citizens over the age of 80 years and of 1000% in the number of 90 year-olds. What impact will this have for frail older people to live their lives in a dignified and fulfilled manner? This is the issue at stake for ageing societies.

Organizations like WHO Europe and Red Cross EU office have formulated policies to contribute to the improvement of the lives of vulnerable older people who not only use resources, but also add values and life-long experiences to society, which may be used as a motor for innovation and advancement. When the old become frail and dependent, societies face a challenge to optimize the (health) care arrangements.

In 2009 the Council of Europe adopted a resolution which states that 'palliative care is a substantial and socially innovative addition to curative, highly scientific medicine....'. (Resolution 1649). It warns against a false opinion where this is seen as a humanitarian luxury western societies no longer can afford in difficult economic situations.

Standards are needed on the European level to guarantee appropriate care arrangements for frail older people, that embrace dignity and respect, quality and continuity, information and shared decision making. How can these efforts be realized in a lasting way? Do we have the expertise, the compassion, and the will to work together as professionals and laypersons? Do we have the courage to face and discuss the end of life?



## THE CONFERENCE

Despite challenges and opportunities, the quality of care for the frail older people is threatened by a lack of manpower and expertise to care for frail old, by unsustainable costs of care in the future and by lack of compassion and societal support, causing numerous ethical dilemmas. Formulating innovative policies, designing new care arrangements and creating networks for future action are the intended outcomes of the conference.



The *goals* of the European conference ‘Dignity for the Frail Old – from Dilemmas to Solutions’ 2010 are:

- to determine principles for better care of frail older Europeans
- to describe the current situation and show possibilities for the future

These goals will be achieved by analyzing future needs and trends, by open exploration of the dilemmas and by identifying potential solutions.

### **Basic concepts**

The conference will present basic concepts and facts needed for an equal and open discussion of the dilemmas and possible innovations by everyone

coming to Norway for the conference. Participants will represent different health and social care systems, cultures and beliefs, bringing wide-ranging and extensive expertise and experience.

The conference will explore the context of dignified care, i.e. the principles of human rights and participation. Additionally the meaning of ageing of societies will be analysed as well as the concept of dignity.

### **Questions to be addressed**

Four questions will be introduced and discussed in detail:

- What level of care is acceptable and necessary? and what level of care can society afford?
- The dying older person: how can we focus on the quality of life without denying death as a fact?
- Tolerance, acceptance or isolation: how do caregivers keep compassion whilst facing the burdens and tensions? Including the role of families, volunteers and professionals.
- Communication and involvement in decision making: what, how, who and when?

These questions and the ensuing discussions will highlight the essential conditions to ensure integration and continuity of care of the frail old.

### **Additional aspects**

The conference is designed to create a new impact and start a process that will be continued in national and international networks. The number of plenary sessions (with excellent keynote speakers) will be limited. In 'solution groups' the participants can work actively, exchanging experiences and information, building networks and formulating possible solutions. Ultimately in a spirit of collaboration, participants will share responsibility for the output of the conference. The narrative perspective, arts and music will be integrated in the conference program. Poster sessions offer the opportunities for both experienced experts, professionals and/or researchers, to present their work.

## **INTERNATIONAL NETWORK**

Since 2005 a European network, initiated by the Dignity Center in Bergen, Norway, has been built in which experts in the field of dignity and palliative care exchange experiences and projects and to optimize care for the frail old. Participants are professionals and researchers from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Romania and United Kingdom, in cooperation with local universities. This network developed the idea of the conference.

## **THE DIGNITY CENTER**

*Dignity Center – Care for the Old*, in the Red Cross Nursing Home, Bergen, is established with its main focus on older people in their most vulnerable stage of life. The main targets are to ensure that these people are treated with care, respect, social integration and the utmost proficiency.

## **SOLSTRAND HOTEL & BATH**

Solstrand Hotel & Bath is situated 30 km outside Bergen, Norway. Its beautiful setting by the fjord, special atmosphere and first class meeting facilities will superbly frame all of the lectures and conventions.

More more info: [www.solstand.com](http://www.solstand.com)



## **ORGANIZERS – CONTACT INFORMATION**

**The core group coordinating the organization of the conference:**

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Prof. Dr. Wim van den Heuvel, Netherlands  
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Sverre Chr. Wilhelmsen, Dignity Center, Norway

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## **In cooperation with:**

AGE – the European Older People's Platform  
[www.age-platform.org](http://www.age-platform.org)

## **Under the Auspices of:**

The European Association for Palliative Care,  
EAPC Onlus [www.eapcnet.org](http://www.eapcnet.org)

## **Supported by:**

Norwegian Union of Municipal and  
General Employees

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Grünenthal Foundation for Palliative Care, Germany

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Helle Bennett Foundation, Norway

**For more information:** [www.dignityold.com](http://www.dignityold.com)

