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“Tho’ much is taken, much abides” A Good Life within Dementia

Tia Powell¹

Short summary

In this essay Tia Powell reflects on what a good life with dementia might look like. Powell argues that placing dementia patients who have reached the final phase of the disease in nursing homes contributes to alienating these patients from society. A better understanding of what it means to live with dementia is needed to develop more responsive approaches to and improve the quality of life of this patient group. Innovative approaches, including the use of technological tools, should be considered along with education of caregivers and family members.

Key Arguments

Peoples’ perceptions of what it is like to live with dementia tend to be unrealistic and stereotyped based on how dementia is portrayed in movies. The reason for this, according to Powell, is that people with dementia in its final phase are often separated from the community because they are placed in nursing homes to keep them safe. The fact that these patients are no longer visible in society promotes ignorance and fear around what it is like to live with dementia.

In order to develop more responsive approaches that can improve the quality of life for people living with dementia, we need first to change perceptions of what it is like to live with dementia. Responsive approaches include better access to medical care from providers who are educated about dementia. Additionally, they include exploring different ways to promote positive emotions in people living with dementia.

Interaction with caregivers and family members who understand and are respectful of the needs of the person with dementia is important for bringing comfort. However, caregiver resources are limited and human interaction may not be the only way to promote joy or bring comfort to people

¹ Tia Powell (2018) “Tho’ much is taken, much abides”: A Good Life within Dementia, in Nancy Berlinger, Kate de Medeiros, and Mildred Z. Solomin (Eds.) What makes a Good Life in Late Life? Citizenship and Justice in Aging Societies, *A Hastings Center Special Report*, September-October 2018: S71-S74.

with dementia. Other means should be explored in the effort to reach this goal, including use of technological tools such as dog or cat robots.

Conclusion:

To improve the quality of life for people living with dementia it is important to promote responses that can increase the person with dementia's experience of comfort and joy. Such responses need not be limited to human interaction only. The use of technological tools to bring joy and comfort and promote positive emotions in people living with dementia should also be explored.