Sense of self expressed by adult children of persons living with Alzheimer’s disease

ADI Conference, 26–29 April, 2017, in Kyoto, Japan

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Overarching project

- 16 support groups attended by
  - People with Alzheimer’s disease (n=43)
  - Family care partners (n=45)
  - Adult children (n=32)
Sense of self

- Self 1 – the embodied, singular self ("I")
- Self 2 – personal attributes, life story
- Self 3 – the social persona

(Harré, 1998; Sabat & Harré, 1992)
What is previously known?

• Self is vulnerable in the
  • person with dementia (e.g. Sabat et al., multiple publications)
  • family care partners (e.g. Kjällman-Alm, et al., 2013; Skaalvik et al., 2016)
• Support group participation might strengthen sense of self (Hedman et al, 2014)
• Caring experience of adult children and spouses differ (e.g. Conde-Sala et al., 2010; Savundranayagam, 2014)
Aim of the study

To describe how adult children of persons who are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease express their sense of self in support groups
Methods

- 4 mutual support groups
- 8 – 10 unstructured group conversations á 60 – 75 minutes
- Qualitative content analysis with a focus on participants’ expressions of self
Participants

• 32 adult children
  • 2 of which living with their parents
• 16 – 56 years old (Md 34)
• 23 women, 9 men
Parents with Alzheimer’s disease

- 25 persons with Alzheimer’s disease
- diagnosed since 0 – 11 years (Md 2)
- 14 younger onset, 7 late, 4 unknown
- 16 participating in groups
Results

- Becoming the care giver
- Feeling of untimeliness
- Supporting both parents
- Protecting the parent with Alzheimer’s
- Increased closeness and alienation
- Loneliness and grief