**Summary graduate thesis ‘ zorg en zingeving’**

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This thesis tries to give more insight in whether care facilities and their nursing staff are paying attention to questions concerning the meaning of life of the elderly. The following hypotheses will be examined: 1) how and in which way is there attention for the meaning of life by using methods to notice problems on this area, 2) do methods who notice questions about the meaning of life contribute nurses, 3) how are nurses capable of noticing questions about the meaning of life.

Taking care implies not only a physical, psychological or a social domain, but it also implies an existential domain in which the whole person is crucial; this includes a holistic view of how to take care of people. Questions about the meaning of life and paying attention to these questions are crucial in the existential domain. Paying attention and care of this existential domain can promote a holistic view. The “Centrum Ontmoeting in Levensvragen” (COIL) and MAAT are leading a project about giving attention to notice questions about the meaning of life. This thesis tries to contribute to this project of the COIL and MAAT by answering the hypotheses mentioned above.

The hypotheses were examined by extensive literature research. Firstly, information was gathered about the contribution of methods which contain the meaning of life. Secondly, empirical research about the methods which contain the meaning of life was examined. Thirdly, information of empirical research that studied the nursing staff about signalizing questions of the meaning of life was gathered, and finally an analysis of the collected information was performed.

Results show that intuition and experience is the foundation for the work of the nursing staff. Furthermore, when a relationship between the nursing staff and the patient is created, it will be easier to notice questions about the meaning of life. In this relationship there is no place for instrumental methods which can create a distance between a nurse and a patient. These results show that there is substantial distance between registration and method, and the noticing of questions from patients by the nursing staff, and that these can collaborate. Education can be helpful and is the foundation of intuition and experience. Therefore the power to notice can be seen as a skill that people can learn.

In sum, noticing questions about the meaning of life contains a certain way of focusing. This includes keeping an open mind to the need of patients. This focusing is crucial in further research about education for nursing facilities and their staff, which can ultimately enhance the quality of care. The capability of noticing questions about the meaning of life should be part of the curriculum of educational programs. Most importantly, this thesis favors the holistic view of taking care of people in which the whole person is important, including their meaning of life.