

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE FOR ADULTS WITH FUNCTIONAL DEPENDENCE IN CONDITIONS OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The importance of Public Healthcare as a science originates from the measures in an integrated manner, targeted at the health of the public through prevention and extending life in good health. Home health care for elderly people with chronic illnesses and functional dependence is one of the priorities of the social politics of Bulgaria, through the creation of regulations for the interaction when organising and planning the support that supplies their health and social needs. In the competencies of nurses is the provision of health and social care for people with chronic diseases and functional dependence. The covid 19 pandemic has presented challenges in implementing nursing interventions. Due to the declared global pandemic on 19.03.2020 of COVID-19, many countries including Bulgaria, introduced strict measures for maximal isolation and social distancing with the aim of reducing transmission to the minimum. This presented an array of challenges for the teams, carrying out the activities for patronage care in the homes of the care receivers. Objective: To review and analyze the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on changes in the daily activities of health care providers in the municipalities of Burgas region. Methods: documentary - research and analysis of information; sociological-anonymous survey; statistically. Results: developed and implemented additional module "Patronage Care +" with expansion of the target group of users and services provided; provided personal protective equipment and disinfectants to the multidisciplinary team providing care; not all project managers have provided antigenic tests for the teams; communication between the team and the GPs of the users - difficult; periodic briefings for compliance with anti-epidemic measures; Of the 41 nurses, 19.51% were quarantined with complaints and positive PSR tests - without hospitalization, and of the home nurses 26.23%. Vaccinated nurses - certainly 2 / project managers are not familiar /; ineffective medical waste management. Conclusion: The provisioning of health and social services and care is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the quality of life of people with chronic illnesses with functional dependencies and under the existing pandemic situation; The care receivers are willing to accept alternative approaches for realizing the activities, providing them with quality of life even with their chronic ailments and degree of disability; The managers and coordinators of project "Patron care" have the capabilities and the resources to maintain the quality of the offered integrated health and social service; The absence of medical nurses in the teams of some municipalities in the Burgas region negatively affects the carrying out of activities of the project. The high percentage of nurses placed under quarantine and home nurses supports the tendency for lack of emergency and periodic instruction, i.e. unsatisfactory activity of the occupational medicine services.

Keywords: *nurse, home care for adults, methods of telemedicine, COVID 19.*

Field: *Medical sciences and health care.*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of Public Healthcare as a science originates from the measures in an integrated manner, targeted at the health of the public through prevention and extending life in good health. The public efforts are to be targeted towards promotion of health, health education and development of social mechanisms for ensuring quality of life and quality health care, such that any individual can pursue their right of health. Mehandgijska G. states (2019) that the heterogeneous nature of the determinants of health predetermines a coordinated participation in its preservation by the public, institutions and the individual.

According to Nacionalna zdravna strategija 2021-2030 – project, to improve the quality of life and prevention of the health risk in the Republic of Bulgaria/RB/ it is necessary to ensure a sustainable development of the public healthcare system and to reach a high level of quality, in accordance with European and global standards.

Home health care for elderly people with chronic illnesses and functional dependence is one of the priorities of the social politics of RB, through the creation of regulations for the interaction when organizing and planning the support that supplies their health and social needs. In her article Mehandgijska G. (2019, p. 102) she wrote „Home care is the carrying out of activities for supplying personal care in the home of people unable to self-service, targeted at satisfying their daily needs for hygiene, eating, physical

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movement, communication, household activities, carrying out daily routines and participation in public life”.

The ministry of health is a specific beneficiary of project BG05M9OP001-2.028-0001 “Patronage Care for the elderly and people with disabilities”, which is carried out with the financial support of the Operational program “Human Resources Development” 2014-2020, cofinanced by the European Union through the European Social Project BG05M9OP001-2.028-0001 „Patronagna griga za vazrastni I lica s uvregdanija”, 2019 fund and introduces a model for patronage care for elderly and people with disabilities, including chronic illnesses and permanent damage - a new type of integrated health and social care for long term care in the community and is carried out on the territory of the entire country. According to Projekt “Patronagna griga +” 2021 a guide to citation, 2017 the participants in a multi-disciplinary team, providing the services from the project are: medical nurse, social worker, psychologist, rehabilitator, home nurse, with specific competencies and responsibility characteristics. WHO (World Health Organisation) declared on 11.03.2020 the COVID-19 epidemic as a global pandemic, which significantly influenced the social life and the health systems of all countries (COVID-19, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/bg/policies/coronavirus/>, 20.08.2020). This is accompanied by an array of restrictive measures, related to the deepening of the social isolation of the care receivers of the “Patronage care” and the changes in the project work, carried out by the members of the multidisciplinary team.

IN the National concept for promoting the active life of the elderly in Bulgaria (2012-2030), МТСП, Sofia 2012, people with chronic diseases and functional dependencies have specific and multifaceted problems, which are the reason for their health, social and psychological isolation. There are five aspects for assessing the functional state of the elderly - daily activities, physical health, mental health, social status, economical status. Popova K., Iv. Stambolova (2018) indicate that to satisfy the deficiencies in the independence and health status of people with chronic illnesses, its necessary to apply a complex approach, through providing effective, competent and quality health and social care.

In normative documents such as the law on people with disabilities (2021) cntegrated health and social care is a set of activities, through which medical specialists and specialists in the area of social services can provide health care and medical surveillance and carry out social work for people with chronic ailments and disabilities, as well as elderly people who require assistance in carrying out their daily routines. As a participant in the mobile work of the team for project “Patronage care” the nurse is involved in development of assessments, creates and updates individual plans for the care receivers; carries out specific health care activities /measures and registers the vital signs, manipulations, bandaging/; carries out prophylactic, promotional and educational activities for increasing the quality of life of the care receivers and their families; monitors all the provided health and social services together with the social worker and this is regulated in Naredba № 1 or 8 febr. 2011 y. Visitations to the home of the care receiver are planned according to the degree of their functional dependency and are usually once or twice a week, for 60 minutes at a time. All activities under the “Patronage care” project include intervention for:

- support, so that the receiver can keep their independence and live a normal and active life inside their home;
- support for the assisting people (relatives, close ones) for decreasing the load and stress in the daily care for people with functional dependencies

Due to the declared global pandemic on 19.03.2020 of COVID-19, many countries including Bulgaria, introduced strict measures for maximal isolation and social distancing with the aim of reducing transmission to the minimum. This presented an array of challenges for the teams, carrying out the activities for patronage care in the homes of the care receivers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To review and to analyses the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the changes in health and social care activities of the patronage care providers in the municipalities in the Burgas region.

The subject of the study are the activities, which the project managers and coordinators have realized with the aim of maintaining the quality of the health care service provided with respect to home care for people with functional dependencies in the situation of a global pandemic.

The object of the study is the knowledge and attitude of the medical nurses of the multiprofile team to maintain the quality of the care in the newly emerged conditions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- documentary - research and analysis of the national and international literature resources, related to the problem;
- sociological - anonymous questionnaire survey of the opinion of the care receivers, and the managers and coordinators of the project "Patronage care";
- statistical - processing and analysis of the obtained results and presenting them in a graphical form.

In the period of the study /from Sept. 2020 to August 2021/ 1080 care receivers are registered, across 9 municipalities in the Burgas region. The activities of the project are carried out in the municipalities of Burgas, Ruen, Pomorie, Kameno, Sredets, Karnobat, Aytos, Sozopol, Malko Tarnovo. The members of the multidisciplinary team, providing the health and social care in the homes of these care receivers are 41 medical nurses, 84 home nurses, 4 rehabilitators and 5 psychologists. The anonymous questionnaire is provided to 241 care receivers, to which, as a result of the assessment of their functional dependency, the result for their preference for a team, providing the home care in the situation of a pandemic, was analysed. When conducting the interview in the group of the care receivers of the health and social services, students from the "Nurses specialty" of the "Prof. d-r. Asen Zlatarov" University of Burgas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An important moment in the planning of the health and social assistance when providing home care is the individual assessment of the needs of the care receiver, qualified in a scale from 0 /no dependency/ to 4 /total dependency/ according to the Methodology of the Social Support Agency, introduced in April 2019. In the formulation of the final assessment, an analysis is made of the deficiencies of the needs for the motor functioning, self-servicing and daily routines, psycho-social function, economic independency / fig. 1/:

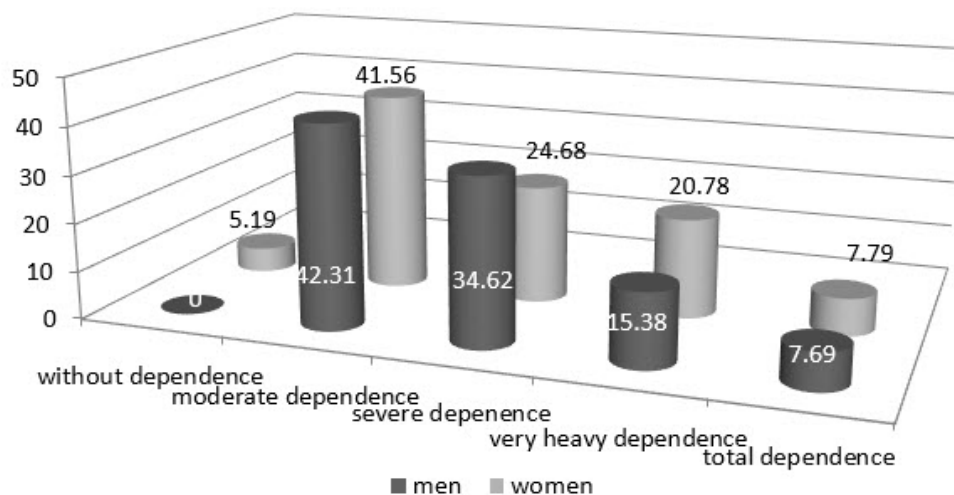


Figure 1. Degree of functional dependence of the needs by gender and age of the respondents using the "Patronage Care" service.

As arguments due to which the care receivers do not forego their participation in the "Patronage care", despite the recommended restriction of contact and distancing are motives, related with deficiencies in the carrying out of their daily routines and tasks, physical functioning, the need of a competent monitoring of the chronic illnesses and the desire to receive information for the control over them /fig. 2/:

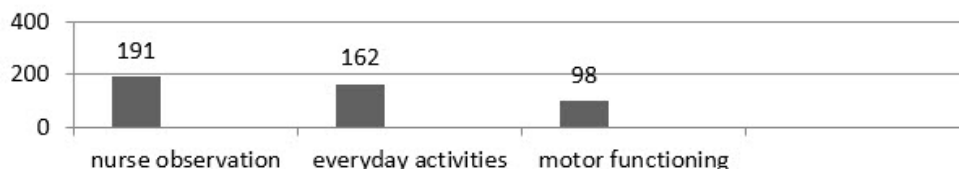


Figure 2. Need for continuation of health and social activities.

The presence of chronic diseases influences the bio-mental and psycho-social health of the studied group of respondents. Their quality of life is worsened mainly due to diseases of the blood circulation and the musculoskeletal apparatus, from diseases of the pulmonary system, endocrine disturbances, cancerous, mental discomfort and depression, due to the social isolation.

When asking the respondents the question of what is their preference for a support team, which is going to increase their quality of life we have received the following results: The largest number of the surveyed point out a need of visits by a nurse. A need for support by an assistant /home nurse/ in their daily activities is pointed out by 77 of the care receivers. A substantial number of the surveyed wished for activities with a rehabilitator. As part of the multidisciplinary team, necessary for the improvement of quality of life of the patronage care receivers, a psychologist and social worker were pointed out. The role of specialist doctors is reflected by the wish of the respondents for consultation examinations /fig. 3/:

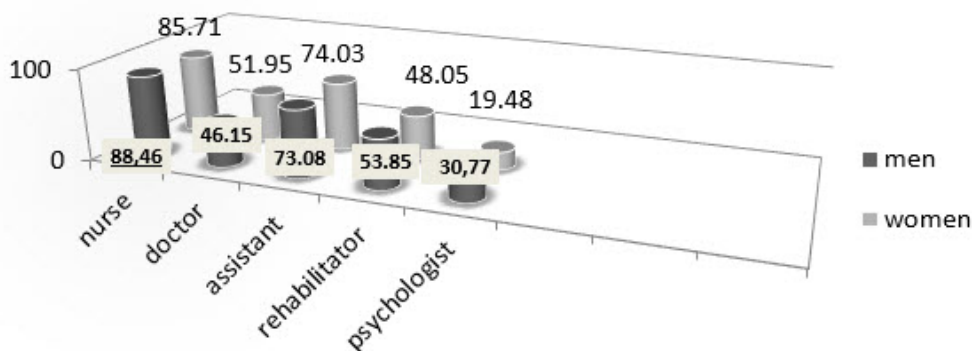


Figure 3. Preferences of support for keeping quality of life

The results of the carried out survey among the care receivers clearly indicates the necessity of the care even in the emerging pandemic situation, as well as which specialists satisfy the quality of the care.

The next step of the research is related with the analysis of the measures taken by the project managers and coordinators to maintain the quality of the provided integrated health and social care for the "Patronage Care" project, realized in the region of Burgas. The first question, which they had to answer specified the number of registered (to the month of September 2020) care receivers and members of the integrated service /table 1/:

Table 1. Registered users and providers of integrated care –IX 2020

Municipality	the users	nurses	assistants	rehabilitator	psychologist	others
Burgas	340	15	10	4	1	
Karnobat	80	2	14	-	1	
Ajtos	52	2	10	-	1	
Pomorie	82	2	10	-	1	
Kameno	29	1	5	-	-	
Sredec	34	1	5	-	-	
Ruen	421	18	26	-	1	1- laboratory assistant
Sozopol	22	-	2	-	-	1- driver
Malko Tarnovo	20	-	2	-	-	1- driver

It is noted, that in some municipalities in the team for integrated care there are no medical nurses. When providing support for the maintenance of the motor activity of people with chronic illnesses only the municipality of Burgas offers competent service by a rehabilitator.

With the announcement of the emergency situation related to COVID-19 the project leaders have asked the care receivers the question: "What do you think about the visitations by members of the team in your home, after the announcement of the pandemic?" with several options possible /fig. 4/:

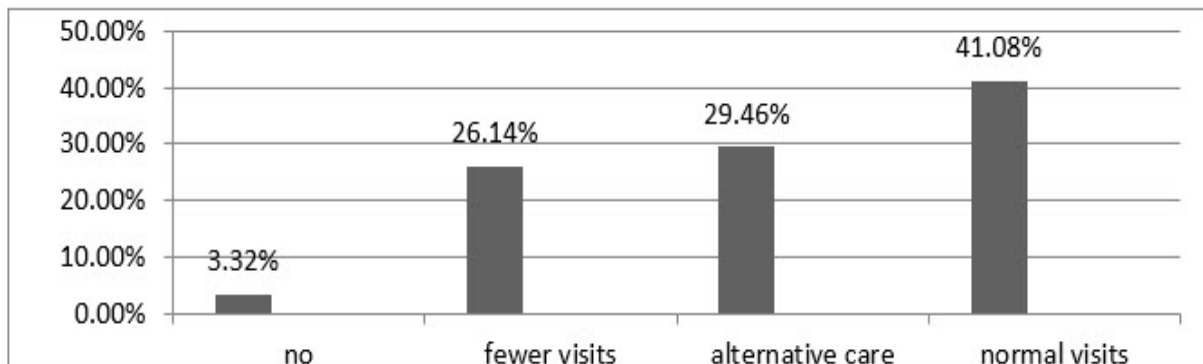


Figure 4. Consumers' opinion about visits to their home by a "Patronage care" team

A small percentage /3.32%/ of the people from the target group prefer the complete cessation of the visitations by the team, with the aim of protecting their personal health. Around 60% of the care receivers are inclined to reduce potentially risk contacts and to use alternative methods /phone, Skype, Viber / for control of their chronic illnesses and consultation help.

Almost half /41.08%/ are worried more from the possibility of reduction of their quality of life, due to the exacerbation and lack of control of their chronic illnesses, than the possible contraction with the coronavirus. What measures were taken for the limiting of the spread of the virus by the project leaders are shown in table 2 /table 2/:

Table 2. Measures taken to limit the possibility of spreading the virus

община	Зашитни предпазни средства	дезинфектанти	Антигенни тестове	Карантина на потребители	Патронажна грижа +	инструктажи	Управление отпадъци
Burgas	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	every week	no
Karnobat	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	once a month	no
Ajtos	yes	yes	no	no	yes	Веднъж в месеца once a month	no
Pomorie Kameno Sozopol	yes	yes	no	no	yes	when the pandemic is announced	no
Sredeç Ruen Malko Tarnovo	yes	yes	no	no	no	when the pandemic is announced	no

From the conducted analyses of the observed categories we can make the conclusion, that in all municipalities, which offer patronage care, there is no deficiency in personal protective equipment and tools and of disinfectants. Antigen tests were provided for the team in the Burgas municipality, because only the project leader in Burgas has stated a desire for such, for control of the spread of the virus among the personnel. In the possibility of a necessary quarantining of a care receiver with no close ones, only two municipalities provide home care, with an additional incentive for the personal assistants. In six of the

municipalities additional activities for the project were started, called "Patronage care+" - administrative services, delivery of food, essentials and medicine to the homes of elderly people over 65y, people with disabilities and placed under mandatory quarantine.

It's incredibly important to carry out additional instructions throughout the announced Coronavirus pandemic. Only the team serving the Burgas municipality the periodic instructions were weekly. In Karnobat municipality they were monthly, in the remaining units of the integrated health and social care service "Patronage care" there were instructions only when the pandemic was announced. It's a disturbing fact that the waste from the medical care are not treated according to the established instructions.

Another important point from the survey was what percentage of the team contracted COVID-19.

From the 41 medical nurses 19.51% were placed under quarantine, without hospitalization, and from the home nurses - 26.23%, also without hospitalization. None of the cases was presented as an occupational accident.

The survey had the aim of analysing the attitude of the medical nurses towards vaccination. Only two of the patronage nurses are confirmed to have been vaccinated against the virus. The remaining leaders and coordinators of the project answer "that they are not aware".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The provisioning of health and social services and care is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the quality of life of people with chronic illnesses with functional dependencies and under the existing pandemic situation;

The care receivers are willing to accept alternative approaches for realizing the activities, providing them with quality of life even with their chronic ailments and degree of disability;

The managers and coordinators of project "Patron care" have the capabilities and the resources to maintain the quality of the offered integrated health and social service;

The absence of medical nurses in the teams of some municipalities in the Burgas region negatively affects the carrying out of activities of the project.

The high percentage of nurses placed under quarantine and home nurses supports the tendency for lack of emergency and periodic instruction, i.e. unsatisfactory activity of the occupational medicine services.

It's necessary to invest additional activities in educating the team, providing integrated health and social care for people with chronic illnesses and a degree of functional dependencies in the situation of a pandemic. It would also follow to invest in the education of the care receivers themselves, as well as their close ones.

It's necessary to invest efforts related to vaccinating both the team providing the care, as well as the receivers and their close ones.

The nurses, providing health and social care are recommended to include alternative methods of carrying out their activities, such as telemedicine.

It is recommended to invest resources in providing tools for distance control and collaboration with the care receivers when carrying out the health care services.

Despite the challenges, arising in present days, people with functional dependencies and chronic illnesses are going to need the integrated health and social services for maintenance of their quality of life. An alternative to the project "Patronage care", which are realized with the financial support of Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2014-2020, cofinanced by the European Union through the European Social Funds are the newly developed nursing practices, which on one hand are a way of satisfying the choice of the care receiver for quality health and social care, and on the other - the affirmation of the choice of a professional realization as a nurse in the 21st century.

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