

## Interventions for the Empowerment of Older People and Informal Caregivers in Transitional Care Decision-Making: a Qualitative Study Using Focus Groups

**Background:** Literature indicates that the empowerment of older people and informal caregivers can improve transitional care. However, there is insufficient insight into precisely how to empower older people and informal caregivers in transitional care decision-making.

**Objective:** To explore interventions by which to empower older people and informal caregivers in transitional care decision-making in the Flemish (Belgian) context.

**Design and Methods:** A qualitative descriptive study using focus groups was conducted between February and May 2022 in the region of Flanders, Belgium as part of the TRANS-SENIOR consortium's collaborative research. A total of 40 people participated in the focus groups, including 12 older people, 13 informal caregivers, and 15 healthcare professionals involved in a transition from an older person's home to another care setting or vice versa. Thematic data analysis was performed based on Braun and Clarke's six-step method.

**Findings:** The empowerment of older people and informal caregivers in transitional care decision-making can be operationalised in alternative ways. Four main themes were identified: providing information; preparing people for what is to come; person-centredness; and providing professional and peer support.

**Conclusions:** Interventions for transitional care empowerment should be person-centred and should focus on information provision, preparing people for what is to come, and providing support. The exact interventions can vary in relation to context, transition pathways, and individual's needs and capacities. However, healthcare (professionals) play a key role in delivering such interventions.

**Implications and future perspectives:** The empowerment of older people and informal caregivers in transitional care decision-making should consider a contextualised, multicomponent, and integrated approach. Such an approach should include interventions focussing on a suitable information provision, preparing people well for what is to come, the person as the central actor in the decision-making process, and continuous support. In addition, healthcare professionals should encourage both older people and informal caregivers to think of possible care scenarios in advance, such as for the day it might be needed, and to organise themselves accordingly. Future studies may address the proposed interventions' implementation and might assess both their feasibility and effectiveness in terms of actual empowerment in transitional care decision-making. In addition, more international original contextualised research on interventions by which to empower older people and informal caregivers in transitional care decision-making is needed