

**Wandering and Older Persons with a Dementia:  
Developing a Method for Participation  
(Back ground to presentation)**

**Jan Dewing  
Independent Consultant Nurse  
Associate Lecturer University of Ulster**

# Back ground to the Research

- Wandering is a frequent concern or issue for many people
- Most people living with a dementia will ‘wander’ at some point
  - What is it?
  - What does it feel like?
  - What purpose does it have?
  - What are the consequences?
  - How should it be responded to?

# Summary of Literature

- Inconsistency in describing wandering
- There is no published research investigating wandering from the perspective of the person who wanders; it is presented through the eyes and experiences of others with little consideration given to what wandering means or signifies for the person with dementia
- The person with dementia does not participate in wandering research other than as a traditional research subject

# Research Questions and Aims

- **My overall question is:**
  - What is wandering?
  
- **Supplementary questions are:**
  - (1) What does wandering mean to older persons with a dementia?
  - (2) What purposes does wandering have?
  - (3) What are the implications for (nursing) care from an expanded understanding of wandering.

# Approach

- Descriptive and interpretive phenomenological approach
  - Merleau-Ponty's philosophy
  - Van Manen's research principles and methods
  - Feminist ethic of caring
  - Process consent

# My Aims

- (1) To contribute a different perspective to understanding wandering in dementia in order to influence the way in which health care professionals assess and manage it.
- (2) To develop a research method that enables persons with a dementia to more actively participate in aspects of the research process
- (3) To further test a process consent method (Dewing 2002) with persons who have a dementia.

# The Method

- Person with dementia (resident) as a participant
- Process consent
- Participation in wandering and use of digital video recording over one year time frame
- Conversational interviews – on the move
- Testing how participants make sense of participation

# Participation in Wandering

Being with/alongside either in companionship, shadowing or observing:

- Reciprocal engagement
- Partial engagement
- Distant observation
- Field notes
- Conversational interviews audio or digital video

# Why video recording?

- Broader view on wandering – captures more data for analysis. A picture and a bigger picture
- Person can watch it immediately – may trigger their input
- Can be used for re watching by the person at a later date
- Less reliance on words – may enable the person
- Visual image – may stimulate me to conceive creative possibilities outside of what is already known.  
Consistent with methodology and philosophy

# Conversational Interviews

- Build in and on process consent
- Recognises needs of the person
- Recognises social skills of the person
- May need to take place as wandering is in progress with some participants
- Video audio or hand noted depending on planning or opportunities

# Example:

- Hand noted as conversation developed unexpectedly:

P “You’re the person keeping a record.....” (We looked at a picture on the wall and I said it felt like a good place)

P “What’s the place like it”

Me “ Perhaps a village”

P “Ah yes ..... not like here. Busy, no quiet. (points to communal area). I live up there (indicates head towards his room). It’s good for one..... there. So I take it (myself) there to there (points route he takes) but I don’t go like that.....I go away... as others get about, around..... and I get on and do what needs to be done. After all how long is a piece of string - not long if it’s short!”

# Example 2: Joan

(also on DCR)

As part of conversations on wandering:

*“Its something made up by the establishment really....to make others feel a problem.”*

*“It means freedom. No matter if I’m a wife mother or what ever its about my freedom”*

# Example 3: Norah

*“Its something that too much is made of.....”*

*“ I can’t really say – the words you know. It must mean something because I do it”*

*“If I don’t do it I go mad in there”*

# Learning to date

- Nursing Home very welcoming – staff very open to research
- Relatives and friends very keen to support research. An understanding of permission and process consent. No negatives about the older person's abilities to consent
- Total population consent work a strain
- Process consent method issues
- Working intensively with several residents at once
- Getting side tracked by other interested residents
- Not loosing sight of some of the participants – going about too fast for me to keep up!
- My presence and its influence on wandering
- Recording from a distance- can it/I be seen?