

PAPER:

***AGEING WELL: NEGOTIATING RESEARCH IN
AGED CARE FACILITIES***

Dr David Beckett

DVET

The University of Melbourne

Dr Peteris Darzins

Geriatric Medicine

The University of Melbourne

and

Jenny Gough

National Ageing Research Institute

The University of Melbourne

Abstract:

This pilot project, funded by a University of Melbourne 'Special Initiative Grant', is investigating ways staff in aged care facilities (ACFs: formerly referred to as nursing homes and hostels) learn in their workplace. The researchers come from different paradigms: the qualitatively-informed Education tradition, and the quantitatively-informed Medical model. Yet this is simplistic, since all three share a professional interest and a good deal of expertise in problem-based learning (e.g. as at McMaster University) for staff in health and community settings.

There is little research in the area of workplace learning within ACFs. However, ACFs are currently in the national policy and media spotlight (eg. The Age August 24 1998 p1 Insight team expose). Staff development is a priority as it is directly related to quality of care. Facility managers are keen to develop insights into and understanding of workplace learning needs and strategies for effective delivery of training. Much of the workforce in ACFs is female and part-time, yet overall ranges from highly qualified health and management professionals to those who are completely unqualified (with perhaps low English literacy), such as patient care attendants.

The aim of this field research is to consider the question: To what extent can the learning needs of staff in ACFs be supported in the workplace and thereby contribute to the development of better care?

There are two groups:

- an Intervention Group of six ACFs,
- and a Control Group of six ACFs.

This paper will report not just on the project to date, but also on the negotiation of research methodology which took place, and the 1999 plans for large-scale research submissions growing out of this pilot project.