

REVIEWS/RECENZJE

H. Robinson, B. MacDonald, E. Broadbent (2014). *The Role of Healthcare Robots for Older People at Home: A Review*. "International Journal of Social Robotics", 6: 575–591.

Reviewed by Karina Melnyk

Literature Review

The article *The Role of Healthcare Robots for Older People at Home: A Review* was written by New Zealander scientists Hayley Robinson, Bruce MacDonald, and Elizabeth Broadbent. Hayley Robinson works in the Department of Psychological Medicine, the University of Auckland. Professor Bruce MacDonald joined the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Auckland in 1995. Elizabeth Broadbent is a professor in the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Auckland.

In this review, I summarize the article and offer comments on some aspects, as well as analyze how this article is useful for social work. I also criticize some of the solutions and suggest how additional research would help improve the acceptance of healthcare robots and promote their future development and use by elder people.

Article Summary

Throughout my reading of this review, it became clear that it focuses on the problems which older people have during their age and where current robotic technologies fit into older people's lives. The authors begin the article with an explanation of healthcare robots and the main issues facing elder people. The authors provide most of the arguments, appealing to technological and robotic solutions, including the success and applicability of healthcare robots, and researching this topic.

In the paper, the authors begin by pointing out several important issues that older people face their age, among them, there are physical decline, cognitive decline, health management, and psychosocial issues. They then state that most of these factors influence admission to nursing home care and propose alternative solutions like robotic ones, which are explored and critiqued and areas for future development identified.

Critical Reflection

The rising number of older people and social work are strongly connected. The old population is an increasing concern because of the predicted strain on social services. The dominant goal of this article seems to be to convince the reader how supreme research in this field is to create more convenient and functional healthcare robots. On the one hand, I agree with the authors that automation can transform the types of social service. A healthcare robot can assist in performing basic daily activities for older people and help stimulate people with brain training exercises to help with cognitive decline. The most important thing is the ability of robots to track the state of health, for example, to measure vital signs and send information to the doctor. In the case of psychosocial problems, robots could improve quality of life by acting as a companion. On the other hand, all these statements give rise to many questions in my head.

First of all, I hardly imagine an eighty-year-old grandmother from Poland buying and using a robot at a time when many people find it difficult to agree to use a cell phone. The authors of this article, who live and teach in New Zealand, talk about the universal use of healthcare robots to help older people, forgetting that cultural context is crucial. Perhaps in New Zealand and definitely in Japan, robotization is something natural, while in Europe, it remains a fairy tale-of-future. Of course, especially in this time, progress is developing incredibly fast – what seemed to us a year ago to be a distant future has become an everyday occurrence. Despite this, I firmly believe that the generation of baby boomers in Western and Eastern Europe suddenly will not start buying robots. In the case of generation X and beyond, this future seems more real, provided that we become more interested in this topic, conduct research, and promote this point in society.

Secondly, if we agree and accept the position that the presence of robots in older people's homes will become something ordinary, I ask myself the following questions. Who will provide such an expensive pleasure to a pensioner, and will this decision be cheaper than sponsoring a home for the elderly? In this review, I am not going to answer the self-asked question, but its existence helps to develop the idea of multifunctional robots. According to the authors of the article, some robots provide both companionship and assistance. Therefore, I believe that robot developers should create multifunctional robots, firstly because the problems faced by older people are often acting in a complex. Moreover, to eliminate the need for seniors to learn how to operate several robots, thus making their use fewer challenges.

Thirdly, some believe that this approach cannot be ethical. The elderly and sick population need the warmth of people, not the care of mechanisms. We are used to the younger generation taking care of seniors, but that's why I want to give an example of the cultural dimensions theory of Dutch social psychologist and sociologist Geert Hofstede, who introduced the division between collectivism and individualism cultures. According to this theory, Poland was included in the culture of individualism – the aim of these cultures is to educate responsible citizens who will be able to deal with problems themselves. In the minds of young people, there is an idea that personal space

and privacy is important to the individual that we only and strive for at home, each family member to have his or her own bedroom, and the possibility of privacy is seen as a basic condition for happy family life.

Therefore, young people try to become independent and society becomes more antisocial by translating the identity of the individual over the group. In modern society, as parents grow older or become infirm, they have to take care of themselves. They often do not expect help from their children, and if they do, they certainly do not count on living with them in old age. So my opinion on the ethical aspect is as follows – time will put everything in its place. There are not enough caregivers for everyone, and the robot is much better than nothing.

Conclusion

The results of this review showed that older people often need help performing daily-activities as well as physical activities (587 (13/18)). The presented technological and robotic solutions are great opportunities for older people. Although public participation in health care and technology development can cause problems and is often criticized, it is clear that older people should not be left behind. We must learn to adapt to the current reality and look for new ideas to solve old problems.

J.H. Jönsson (2019). *Servants of a 'Sinking Titanic' or Actors of Change? Contested Identities of Social Workers in Sweden*. "European Journal of Social Work", 22: 2: 212–224.

Reviewed by Stefan Strobl

This article is a great example for the strengths of good qualitative research. It manages to draw an accurate image of the consequences the ongoing development of neoliberalism and marketisation of the welfare state has on the work context and the professional identity of social workers. It delivers the analytical framework and theoretical depth to embed the described experiences of field workers, collected through qualitative interviews.

Experiences everyone who has worked in the field of social work will be able to draw parallels to. Therefore, the article will be of great interest not only for scholars but also and especially for students and practitioners of social work. The latter two are urged to read the piece as one could make the argument that it's only in one's best interest (sticking with the author's metaphor) to at least know if one is on a supposedly sinking ship. The claim of a profession of social work alone makes it a necessity to reflect upon this important issue supposedly changing the context and character of social work to such an extent.

The paper is very straight-forward in its structure. After a short introduction and short explanations to the study the author starts to elaborate on the neoliberal political context of social welfare and social work in Sweden. Answers to the actual questions of the paper are answered throughout the whole paper, although being brought into context with the actual findings from the interviews in the second half of the paper.

Although this structure could be perceived as confusing from times to times by some, going beyond the redundancy that is to be expected from a scientific paper, explaining hypotheses etc. in the beginning, one could very well make the point that it's this constant repetition of the issues that make the findings memorable and stresses their importance by going further into detail throughout the paper.

About the study design itself it is to be said that, following a qualitative approach, interviews with 15 social workers have been conducted. The sample was composed of social workers engaged in different areas of public social work, such as child and family welfare, addiction care, economic support and social work with migrants and asylum seekers, featuring also a broad range of differing work experience from 20 plus years to below 5 years.

The author draws the current image of a Swedish welfare state as a shadow of its former self. Undergone 30 years of neoliberal reorganisation its social workers are not able to guarantee the rights and entitlements of people anymore. Managerial legal and administrative frames are replacing the traditional and solidary basis of social work, limited support to people in need, individualisation and the fragmentation of social work are to be noticed.

As the theoretical framework of his analysis the author mainly relies on Foucault and Bourdieu. Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence', as "soft means of dominance" is used to explain the reproduction of hierarchical positions and power structures in society. According to Foucault every domination includes some degree of acceptance, something that is to be observed when it comes to neoliberalism and especially the developments in the welfare state, as voices across the whole political spectrum see it with out alternative.

In other words, neoliberalism is largely legitimised as the only possible system of organising economy, politics and culture. Those individuals who adjust themselves to neoliberal imperatives get rewarded and those who do not can be subjected to punishment (p. 217).

As one of those points a big portion of the interviewed social workers agreed on, the author presents the issue of changed work conditions.

The emphasis on 'efficiency' and on 'budget management skills' has led away from what many social workers consider as the heart of social work, namely meeting the needs of people in their social realities formed by broader structural approaches in social work (p. 218).

Instead they perceive themselves as pure "paper-pusher/secretary".

Several practitioners also report the fear, that they could be sanctioned negatively or punished, if not consenting to the new expectations. “The current neoliberal model of social work needs only ‘uncritical servants’ who accept and work in accordance with what is defined by the leading section of the organisation as desirable social work”.

These changes also have significantly altered the role social workers take towards their clients. With the concept of individual responsibility clients get more and more responsible for their own social problems and social workers are pushed into the role of a “controller and ‘not a solidary worker’” (p. 219).

The author goes more into depth in regards to the professional identity and the extent to which social workers accept the new norms, coming to the conclusion that albeit all the struggles many social workers would still consider themselves “agents of helping people in need and improving unprivileged groups’ living conditions”. The author stresses the tendencies within the profession to resist, social workers would not be passive actors but could “actively take different stances and choose their own identifications”. This would demand a “radical political stance”, though.

To summarize, the strength of the article lies in the detailed perspectives the field workers are able to open up for the reader. The trends they describe are most likely relatable to the professional experience of field workers also from other countries.

Due to the arguably glorified image the Swedish welfare state still possesses in the public opinion, especially in other countries, it might be predestined to show those neoliberal tendencies. The presented experiences of field workers might serve as a refreshing eye-opener for many readers. To stress the metaphor of the sinking ship for the “Welfare state in retreat” a last time: even if the social systems in other countries never might have seemed as unsinkable as in Sweden the neoliberalisation and therefor potential “sinking” of them might be as acute, if not more as in Sweden. The call for a reflection of the role one as a social worker, decides to play in these changing times could not be more urgent.

M. Newcomb, J. Burton, N. Edwards, Z. Hazelwood (2015). *How Jung’s Concept of the Wounded Healer Can Guide Learning and Teaching in Social Work and Human Services*. “Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education”, 2 (17): 55–69.

Reviewed by Anna Szargiej

The decision for taking a job in social services is often grounded in the desire to help other people. Social workers must deal with a variety of problems in society and meet a lot of people in their worst situations. The focus of social work is on the support of persons, who for some reason, have been marginalized and to help them make a change, so that they can function again. For this reason, social work should always be guided by a sense of justice and orientation toward the needs of the individual. The social worker’s own

personality is, in such work, obviously the most important instrument of action. After all, it consists of building a relationship with the client and working with emotions. The limits of the social worker's own mental resilience and flexibility also represent the limits of his or her own intervention. It is therefore extremely important in the preparation of people for this profession to recognize certain possible emotional and mental issues of future social workers.

In this article, Michelle Newcomb and the co-authors introduce us to a topic that is very important in discussing the mental health of social workers. They present to us the concept of the "wounded healer", developed by Swiss psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). The analysis of the concept presents an issue that should be taken into consideration for the education of social workers and professionals in human services. The article especially points out the early experiences of childhood adversity in the life of people who choose to take on a helping profession. The text describes the possible implications.

Jung created the concept of the "wounded healer" to outline the phenomenon of people choosing a career in social services after witnessing suffering in their own lives. He believed that one's own adverse experiences enable people to develop empathy and overcome their own wounds by providing help for others. As a student of Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychodynamics, Jung was interested in investigating people's pasts in order to understand their actual behavior in the present. He stated the potential of using the workers' own experiences in fulfilling their tasks in helping professions. This concept was, however, criticized for overlooking the negative effects of those previous events, which can also lead people to develop a trauma or burnout during work with other people's crises.

The authors present to us the fact that, according to some studies, between 7–55% of social work or human services students have experienced some sort of childhood adversity. It is, therefore, extremely important to consider this factor in their education process. Per the authors, it is crucial to understand the associated potential risks and benefits. The possibility of counter transference and inappropriate self-disclosure by "wounded healers" is real. After suffering themselves, social workers are likely to identify with a client and to disclose their own experiences to that client. This can endanger the success of the helping process and lead to neglect of professional action. Furthermore, there exists a much higher probability of trauma and burnout due to the risk of reviving old experiences.

However, it is also possible to find some benefits of "wounded healers" working in social work. Their lived experiences can provide them with additional knowledge and much needed competences. A very important skill for social workers is to have good resilience which serves as protection against stress and emotional hardship. A "wounded healer" may have developed resilience in his or her past and is therefore well-prepared for this kind of job.

The conclusion of the article is that Jung's concept of the "wounded healer" offers a significant way of rethinking education for social work and human services. While taking into account the huge number of people experiencing suffering in their lives and later choosing their careers in a helping profession, it is crucial to weigh the risks and potentials they bring with them and to start dealing with this issue from the beginning, meaning during their education. The authors describe how, after their education, many students did not feel adequately prepared to engage in difficult cases with clients and that there was a clear lack of teaching self-care techniques to protect social workers from mental health problems. In order to improve the work quality of social services, the education should suit the learning needs of the students and consider their possible mental health circumstances.

I strongly recommend this article because it illustrates some crucial thoughts with which I am dealing during my education in social work. It has always been of interest to me, why so many people choose to dedicate their lives to a job in social work, which is not well paid and, in many cases, not even sufficiently valued enough in society. I have myself witnessed social workers ending in a burnout, because they got too involved in their work and had difficulties demarcating themselves from their clients' cases. My interest led me to discover scholarly literature about a pathological factor in the motivation for helping other people.

This is a difficult topic, because the general willingness to help is mainly recognized as a good virtue in society. People who help others appear as noble and are praised for their sacrifice for others. It is hard to imagine that helping can also have a pathological motivation. Nevertheless, it is true that no human behavior is led by total selflessness and that there is always an (maybe hidden) interest behind it.

A pathological motivation in caring for others might be a hidden need for recognition and love, which has not been satisfied in the early childhood years. Like Carl Jung, who was a proponent of psychoanalysis, there are other thinkers who state that a lack of love in the past leads to certain behavioral patterns in the present. In many cases, those people who experienced neglect search for a way to satisfy their needs for appreciation and love in their adulthood. Being in the position of a helper, which means caring for others and experiencing their thankfulness, seems to attract some people, who find their sense of being in helping professions, e.g. social work. Nevertheless, it is of great significance to be aware of the specific motivation guiding one on this path.

An unreflective way of behaving in the helping process represents a danger for the client, as well as the social worker. Some psychologists describe how assistance can become an addiction and lead to massive consequences. As the client's regaining of independence is a main goal in social work, it is crucial to follow the concept of empowerment: in other words, the support of the client's own competence and his or her ability to help him – or herself. Social work should never lead to a dependency upon social services but, on the contrary, make independence possible. A social worker who is driven by his or her hidden, unsatisfied needs is likely to hold on to the client and make the latter's autonomy impossible.

Social workers should have appropriate reflectiveness about their behavior and constantly question their personal and sometimes unconscious motivation to act. As already mentioned, the main instrument of action is the personality of the social worker. One should therefore be fully aware of this instrument and always keep working on it.

In line with this thinking, there is a great responsibility to place appropriate emphasize on the mental health of social work students during their education. I agree with the authors of the article, who state that, for now, this issue is not stressed enough at the universities educating for this profession. It would be very helpful for future social workers and their clients if preparatory education would offer more room for self-discovery and coping strategies. An early focus on this aspect can help avoid the negative consequences of childhood adversity experiences of social workers and, more likely, guarantee a professional way of working.