

**(28) The Social Worker's Role in Homes for the Aged:
A 20 Year Perspective**

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Background: Since social work discovered its relevance for older persons residing in institutions, different models have been introduced to describe the role of social workers in homes for the aged. Despite the rich academic literature on this topic, very few empirical researches exist about the actual reality in this field. The sole research in this field in Israel was conducted by Miriam Bar-Giora, in 1982.

Goals: One of the aims of this study was to compare the findings of Bar-Giora's study with a similar study conducted 20 years later, in 2002, in order to find out whether and how the role of social workers changed during this period, if at all.

Method: Both studies were based on quantitative analysis in form of closed and structured questionnaires sent by mail to social workers working in homes for the aged.

Findings: Positive findings of the research indicate that today's social workers in homes for the aged are more mature, more experienced, have better academic background, and receive higher appreciation. The negative findings are that on-the-job training is less, the levels of stress and time-constraints are higher, and the level of participation in professional courses is lower. Furthermore, the findings indicate a conservative approach which is expressed by lack of evidence for change in the professional values and practice.

Conclusion: The change in theoretical literature on the role of social workers in homes for the aged, from paternalism to autonomy respecting is not mirrored in the actual practice in this field. More has to be done in order to transform the theoretical shift into an actual performance change of social workers in this field.

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