

Life After Care: Carers' Experiences of Cessation of the Caring Role

Dr. Carol Kelleher, Dr. Jacqui O' Riordan, University College Cork

Background

- ❖ Many carers' experience loss when those whom they care for **die** or **transition from home care to residential care homes** and the **caring role changes**.
- ❖ Carers' experiences of loss are **multilayered**, as they are experienced with the context of the wider **family and healthcare and legal contexts** in which carers are embedded.

Research Purpose

- ❖ **To explore family carers' experiences of loss when the caring role ceased or changed.**

Methodology:

- ❖ **Qualitative** research study - September 2014 and June 2015
- ❖ Eight Interview participants - **Four female family carers, Four male family carers** - selected by the Head of the regional Carer Association - **Face-to-face semi-structured interviews**.
- ❖ Caring contexts included caring for family members or friends with special needs, stroke and Alzheimer's suffers and included experiences of both home and residential care.
- ❖ Data Analysis - interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis, NVivo 10.

Findings:

- ❖ The **themes of loss** identified included:
 - **Loss and Family and Friends**
 - **Loss of Ones Own Identity**
 - **Loss and Opportunity, Career and Financial Impacts**
 - **Loss and Making the Transition into Longer Term Residential Care – Continuing to Care**
 - **Loss of Fear of Speaking Out and Advocating for those being Cared For**
 - **Experiencing the Ultimate Loss – Death**

Conclusion:

- ❖ The experience of loss (and sometimes gain) is complex, **multi-layered** and subjective and varies from person to person, family situation and caring context.
- ❖ It is important that policy makers, carers representatives and healthcare staff and organisations **understand appreciate and highlight this complexity** and **assist carers** in this complex and challenging role and that their contribution – within families, within the healthcare system and within society - is appreciated, facilitated and acknowledged.