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Inter-Generational Support and Care for the Elderly: the Only Solution?

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Aims. To discuss the consequences of demographic, epidemiological, and social transition in modern societies regarding permanent care for elderly people. Empirical research in social medicine and epidemiology underestimate the importance of permanent care.

Methods. Selected one-dimensional data from three studies on the subject of permanent care in Germany, including official data and data from interviews with caregivers and care-dependent people.

Results. The descriptive data show that permanent care is primarily provided by inter-generational support, mostly by family members. It is indicative that this will change in the future. There is an evident need for new forms of care, either professional or intra-generational.

Conclusion. Social policy has to take into consideration these developments and play an active role in encouraging inter-generational, intra-generational, and professional help. It is of growing importance to assist permanent care by providing technical means and support for care-taking relatives.

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