



NEED FOR GERIATRIC CARE IN BULGARIA

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there is reported a rapid pace of population aging in Bulgaria, which became one of the biggest challenges to modern Bulgarian society. Social policy is directed, except to provide institutional care, and to provide care at home.

The main objective of the study was to provide updated information on the current attitudes towards geriatric care in the country.

Materials and Methods: To achieve the objective we examined a sample of three target groups of Stara Zagora through anonymous survey, direct observation and oral interviews.

Results and discussion: The trained unemployed people within the operational programs recognize the need for training and the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills to care for elderly people and people with disabilities as they wish further training and upgrading of acquired basic knowledge. Working people in geriatric institutions clearly support the specialty "Geriatric Care" in order to have qualified geriatric specialists in the teams. The created "Geriatric Care" specialty is new and still unknown to the country, but there is already an interest in graduating high school youth.

Key words: aging, need, geriatric care, strategies, policies

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a rapid pace of population aging is reported in Bulgaria, which became one of the biggest challenges to contemporary Bulgarian society. In-depth analyzes are carried out and active work on strategies and policies to solve this problem.

The analysis of the situation in Bulgaria in respect of all published statistics for demographic indicators, show population aging, which is a trend in Europe. The data of UN show that Bulgaria ranks fifth on the rate of population aging in the world (1).

According to the EC the population of Bulgaria in 2050 will be less than 6 million. Social policy is directed, not only to providing institutional care, but care at home. Present specialized state institutions for housing and home care reported that there is no profiled and qualified staff to

care for the elderly. NGOs and private companies are more active in creating new forms of care for older people, but also, besides the financial support, they need trained professionals with geriatric focus. The future of care for the elderly is directed from informal care by relatives, to a professional geriatric care. The availability of highly trained geriatric specialists with a high level of competence for working with adults and older people, would enhance the quality of life of elderly people in the country (2). At this stage we have no specialists who are trained to take professional health care for the elderly. Such care is taken by nurses, whose number is grossly is extremely insufficient and there is a serious shortage of staff in all sectors of the health system.

After thorough research and analysis of the demographic situation in Bulgaria, the needs of the elderly and geriatric institutions in the country, after studying the international experience in providing geriatric care, and the training of geriatric specialists, Medical College

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of Trakia University- Stara Zagora created for the first time in the country the specialty "Geriatric care". There were three new surveys conducted among three target groups in Stara Zagora region, in regard to geriatric care in current and future plan.

The main purpose of the study was to provide updated information on the current attitudes towards geriatric care in the country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the objective we examined a sample of three target groups in Stara Zagora region by an anonymous survey, direct observation and oral interviews.

The first group consists of 44 long-term unemployed people from different ethnic backgrounds, low educated and almost equal number of men and women aged 20-71 years, who had been trained by operational program. An anonymous survey was made to establish the level of motivation for training after completed initial training to acquire the knowledge and skills for taking care of elderly with severe chronic diseases, people with disabilities and

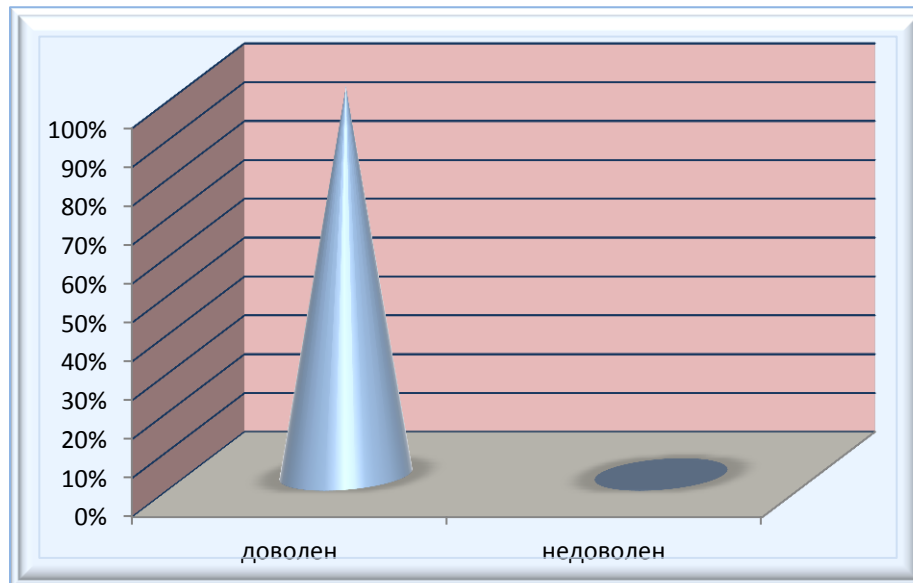
elderly living alone who have lost fully or partially their physical or mental abilities.

The second group consists of directors and employees of geriatric institutions /43 women and 3 men/. After discussing the issues in geriatric institutions a survey was made aimed at identifying the needs of highly specialized geriatric specialists in the institutions providing care for elderly people.

The third group consists of 115 graduating high school seniors /77 girls and 38 boys aged 18 years/ who were interviewed during the candidate student campaign. One purpose of the study was to study the level of their interest in the medical specialties and in particular in the new specialty "Geriatric care".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

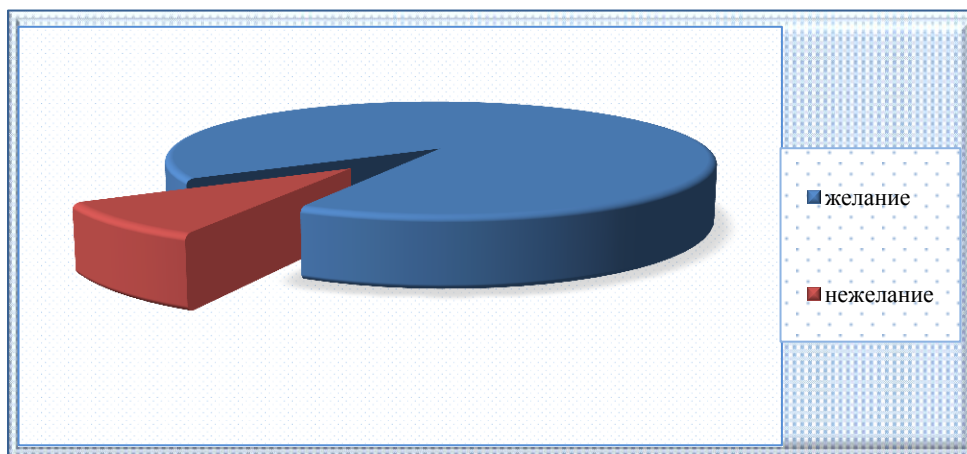
The first target group of trained unemployed was within the operational program for providing care at home for a certain short time period. In regard to the degree of overall approval of the first target group on the training, all trainees responded that they are very satisfied (**Figure 1**).



Satisfied *Not satisfied*
Figure 1. Degree of overall approval of training

On the desirability of trainees to be engaged in similar courses, 40 trainees have responded

positively, and four of the group said they did not wish to engage in similar trainings (**Figure 2**).



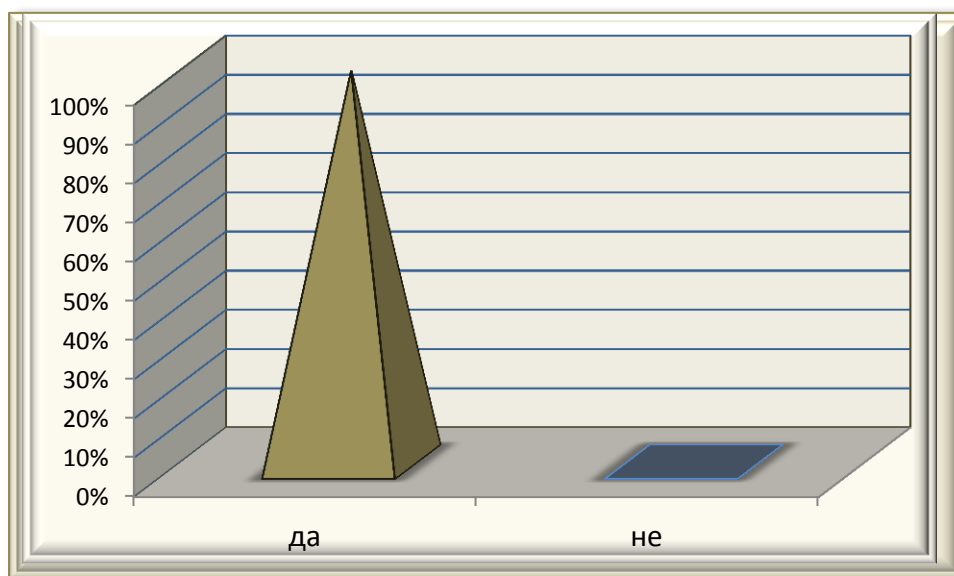
Unwillingness *Willingness*

Figure 2. Degree of motivation of trainees to be engaged in similar courses

When asked what are their recommendations for improving training in the future, 60% of the respondents indicated the need to implement other advanced trainings, 35 % of the trainees believe that they need training with longer duration, and 25 % believe it is necessary to have more such programs to care for older people and expressed concern that after the project of this program, they will become unemployed again and they could not apply to

practice what they have learned during the training.

The second target group consists of directors and staff of geriatric institutions. All respondents answered positively on the need for highly qualified specialists in the specialized geriatric institutions providing care for elderly people (**Figure 3**).



Yes *No*

Figure 3. The need for geriatric specialists in geriatric institutions

The third target group consists of graduating high school seniors surveyed during the admissions campaign.

When asked whether they are interested in medical specialties 31.5% of the respondents answered positively, 48.6% were negative and 20.8% responded "sort of". (**Figure. 4**)

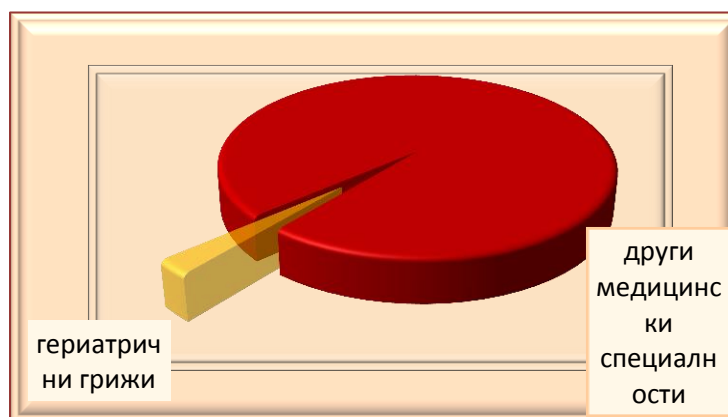


Yes No Sort of

Figure 4. Level of interest in medical specialties

14 % responded that they would apply for specialty "Medicine" of those who responded positively and "Sort of", 7% would apply for specialty "Nurse", 6% for specialty "Midwife",

22% indicated "Rehabilitation therapist", 4.4% - in "Rehabilitation therapist", 2.6% - specialty "Geriatric care", and 5.2% responded "Other". **(Figure 5)**



Geriatric care

Other medical specialty

Figure 5. Level of interest in Geriatric care

CONCLUSIONS

1. The unemployed trained within the operational programs recognize the need for training and the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills to care for elderly people and people with disabilities and express a desire for continuous training and upgrading of acquired basic knowledge.
2. Workers in geriatric institutions clearly support the specialty "Geriatric care" in order to provide highly qualified geriatric specialists.
3. The specialty "Geriatric care" is new and still unknown to the country, but the graduating high school youth are already interested.

All this leads to the conclusion that Bulgaria still lacks a primary point of contact necessary for

providing care for the elderly people. Skilled professionals have only basic skills and can not cover this deficit and can not provide quality care. These needs can be met only by geriatric specialists at a medical college level that have multiple competencies to help adults and older people to improve their quality of life.

REFERENCES

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