Population is aging in Finland and at the same time a need of care for frail old people increases. Many old people receive informal care and assistance from their nearest relatives. If you think about elderly couples, spousal care is often the most common alternative for organising social care at home. Many old people prefer spousal care to formal care.

In my study I see care as two-sided interactions. I’m interested in what giving care and receiving care means to the elderly couples in their everyday life? My questions: 1. What meanings wives and husbands assign to the care and their everyday life? 2. What meanings wives and husbands assign to their position as a spouse, care-giver and care-receiver?

I have interviewed 11 couples (both wives and husbands = 22 persons) who take care for each other. Most of the care-givers are women (8/11). Care-givers are about 65 -75 years old and care-receivers about 65-83 years old. The caring situation has lasted at least three years. All couples had taken part in a holiday which was arranged by The Association of Care Giving Relatives and Friends in Finland. But only one couple receives home care allowance from the local municipalities.

The study is based on a social constructionistic and a discourse analytical view of construction of meanings in human communication.. The interpretation of the spouses speech I have made use of Harvey Sack’s method of Membership Categorization Device (MCD).

Care-giving and care-receiving gives many meanings in spouses life. It is natural part of their everyday life. It means feelings, physical and emotional acting and meeting. They are negotiating with each other for "the right care", how to give and to receive care in the right way. Care-receiver wants to be so independent as possible. He/she doesn’t want only be a person who needs care and assistance. Care-giver wants to be a good and responsible carer. They want to live together as a couple and continue their normal life at home. The home means continuity and normality in life. It is the place where they can feel free, independent and autonomic.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords
elderly care
everyday life
home care
spouses

Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information