

Abstract No. 6.4      Thursday 7th September 2017 at 14:15-15:00

**Title: My isolation makes me fear that I'll forget how to communicate**

Presenter:                      Rikke Norup Christiansen, CFD Rådgivning, Denmark

Co-presenters:                Karin Moreau Andersen and Malene Kure Strandkvist

Main focus: Mainly practice/Acquired deafblindness

Abstract: "My isolation makes me fear that I'll forget how to communicate"

The number of elderly people increases and more and more people are living longer. Therefore the number of elderly people who have both vision impairment and hearing loss are increasing. We can see how welfare systems around Europe are under a lot of pressure. How do we ensure, that the general perception of people suffering from both vision impairment and hearing loss is different from people "just" getting old. Working professionally with this particular group of (elderly) people, it's important for us to describe their special needs.

Elderly with acquired deaf-blindness can only benefit from the same activities as other elderly if their deafblindness is taken in consideration and necessary initiatives are taken. In order to achieve better circumstances for the elderly with acquired deafblindness the deafblind consultants in Denmark are offering advice and education to their family as well as their official caregivers in care homes and home care. Knowledge of the consequences of acquired deafblindness as well as knowledge of how to interact on behalf of this knowledge can lead to a more meaningful life not only for the person with acquired deafblindness but also the surroundings.

For this workshop you will meet two elderly deafblind citizens describing some of the challenges of their everyday life. "My isolation makes me fear that I'll forget how to communicate" – says one of them; the 85 year old man, staying at a nursing home. The workshop will also give you an insight into what kind of advice and education we provide to professionals working with our deaf-blind citizens.

For caregivers, it may be difficult to assess how much citizens can see and hear. The consequences of sensory loss may vary from each situation or from day to day.

Questions occur: How do you interact and communicate with a person who is functionally deafblind - to secure participation and avoiding misunderstanding?

Why don't they participate in activities or why do they withdraw (resign) from activities after a while? Is it possible to change this situation? Isolation is a consequence of lack of touch of closeness and maintaining social connectedness. What are the consequences of isolation?



The aim of the education for caregivers is to supply the caregivers with knowledge of acquired deafblindness and an understanding of the impact the acquired deafblindness can have on daily life. Focusing on how consideration can enable touch of closeness and maintaining social connectedness.

To simulate the impact acquired deafblindness can have on people the participants are blindfolded and hearing-impaired at the beginning of the sessions and during some educational exercises.

The sessions vary in length and content according to the wishes of the participants but mostly include presentation referring to (if any) known people with acquired deafblindness, exercises and discussion.

Relating the topic to people known to the caregivers makes the topic recognitionable, crucial and meaningful.