

Additional file 1: An overview of the design and course of the overall project

We conducted a practice development project that was carried out using participatory action research approach in three phases [1]. As the concept of the specialized unit is rather complex, we expected dynamic development processes. The action research approach allowed us to address these, to explore them scientifically and to stimulate systematic reflection processes. In accordance with the participatory action research, the project was planned and carried out together with the people involved, whose social world and meaningful actions were investigated. By combining the knowledge interests and perspectives of practice and science, we pursued the two objectives: understanding and changing [2]. The action research approach is divided into the three phases of exploration, action, evaluation.

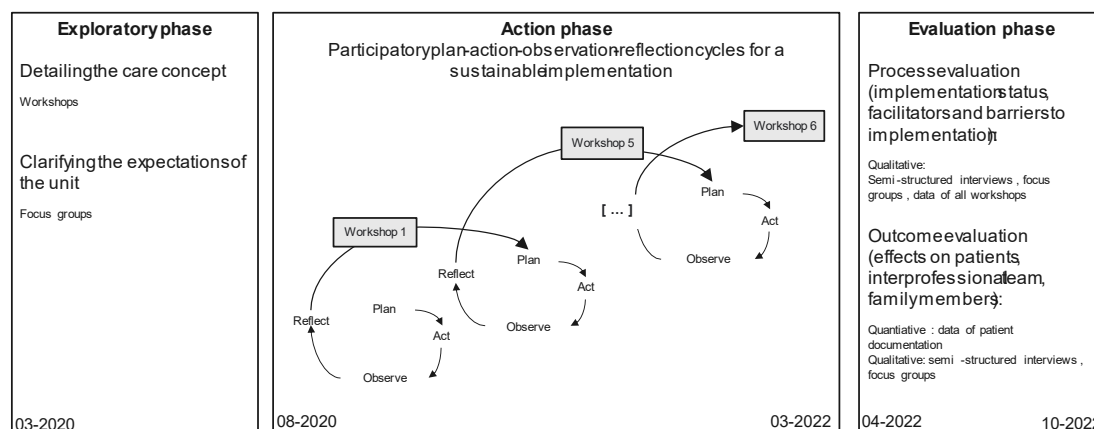


Figure 1: Design and course of the study

In the exploration phase (phase 1) we examined in-depth the concept of the specialized unit for persons with cognitive impairments, its characteristics, the expected changes, and the planned implementation strategies. We, the project team (three members of the nursing team, one medical doctor, one therapist, one social worker and two nurse scientists) jointly defined these central aspects of the concept in two workshops. In the first workshop, we developed the basis for a logic model [3], which links the sets of interventions of the concept with the expected changes. The scientists of the project group elaborated the first draft of the logic model, which then was validated in a second consensus workshop by the project group. Furthermore, we conducted two focus groups with members of the interprofessional team of the geriatric hospital to enquire their expectations of the specialized unit. The results of the workshops and the focus groups built the basis for the first reflection in the action phase.

The action phase (phase 2) encompassed participatory action reflection processes to further develop and sustainably implement the concept of the specialized unit for persons with cognitive impairments. For this purpose, we carried out six action research cycles with the phases planning - action - observation - reflection [4]. Figure 2 shows the application of the action research cycles in the concrete project. We reflected the implementation status, the selected strategies and influencing aspects. Subsequently, we (re-)planned the areas of

improvement identified in the reflection. The reflection and planning took place in workshops of the project group. In the time between the workshops, the adaptations of the concept of the unit for people with dementia or the implementation strategies were implemented (action) and the changes were recorded (observations).

The evaluation (phase 3) included a process and an outcome-evaluation. The process evaluation is reported in this paper and examines the implementation status of the concept for the specialized unit as well as barriers and facilitators to the implementation. Furthermore, we analyzed the applied implementation strategies. The outcome evaluation dealt with the impact of the concept on patients with cognitive impairment, the interprofessional team and family members and loved ones. To investigate effects on patients we compared routine data of patients with cognitive impairments before the concept was implemented with routine data of patients after concept was implemented by means of descriptive and inferential statistics. To explore changes experienced by the interprofessional team we conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the team members. We also interviewed family members and loved ones to study their experiences on the specialized unit. All qualitative data was analyzed with Kuckartz's content analysis [5].

Detailed statements about the expected changes and thus about the out-comes to be examined can only be made on the basis of the complete concept of the ward for people with dementia. Therefore, these will be worked out in a participatory process in the exploration phase with the project group.

References

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