

extent of care and support needed. For example, information concerning family members with advanced forms of dementia would more likely be of interest to those placing relatives in nursing homes. Again, two versions of this book, one addressing assisted living and one nursing homes, might well be valuable, especially if the former focused more extensively on helping older persons make their own decisions about moving.

Although this book is written for a lay audience, Silin does incorporate some concepts that are intriguing to an academic or professional audience. For example, in Chapter 5, Silin makes the distinction between good care and good caring. "Good care means up-to-date and competent professional practice from all the staff members in a home. It can come only from people who have training and knowledge in the field of geriatrics" (p. 96). In contrast, "Good caring means that the staff understands and responds to the emotional needs of the residents and behaves in a manner that meets those needs. It comes from people who are warm and loving" (p. 97). Thus, Silin argues that while good care and good caring are both ideal, they do not always occur simultaneously in long-term care, an important point that everyone involved in long-term care should understand. Silin also raises the following question: "Can a nursing home or assisted living facility provide meaning and purpose?" (p. 100). This query is integral to the very nature of long-term care facilities and how they function.

Silin clearly understands the experiences of family caregivers both before and after a relative is placed in a nursing home or assisted-living facility. He thus provides the reader with information on some anticipated, and worthwhile, topics, such as how to continue the very important family-caregiving role after a relative is placed in long-term care. The content in Chapter 4 that focuses on dealing with guilt, loss, and grief is exceptionally insightful with respect to long-term care place-

ment. Silin provides family members the much-needed reassurance that, in some instances, using nursing home and assisted-living services is the right decision for the older person and his or her family members.

In Chapter 9, Silin offers extensive information on preparing for the move, focusing on how to prevent problems, how to anticipate what should and can be done ahead of time, and how to reduce stress on moving day. His specific advice for those caring for relatives with dementia is also particularly useful. Each chapter ends with a story by a family member that memorably reflects and illustrates the content of each chapter.

Silin effectively includes some content that might not be expected by family members reading this book. His treatment of abuse goes far beyond identifying its existence in long-term care. He tries to help family members identify when and why abuse occurs and also explores the family's role in preventing it. Making effective complaints, a very pragmatic issue, is addressed from a problem-solving perspective, while offering compliments is referred to as "throwing bouquets" (p. 261). Although Silin recognizes that complaints are often warranted, he purports that they occur at a ratio of 20 complaints to 1 compliment. Since employees find it difficult to work under these conditions, he recommends that family members try to throw more bouquets. Finally, although it is not financially feasible for many families, Silin suggests that family members, especially if they are unable to be physically present in the long-term care facility, hire a companion to provide additional physical and emotional support.

This is a valuable book that can help family members immensely both before and after placing a relative in long-term care. Silin's writing style is readily accessible by a broad audience, and his humour is likely to be appreciated by family members experiencing what is often a highly charged and emotional situation.

*Promoting the Concept of Personhood in Practice*, Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies, 2009.\*

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*Personhood* is a concept that has been widely used to raise awareness of people as being intrinsically worthy of respect and dignity. Most commonly, personhood

has been invoked in discussions concerning highly vulnerable populations, particularly those individuals at the start and end of life. With respect to aging, the concept of personhood has helped to shift our understanding of dementia from a technical or medical framework to one that is more humanistic.

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*Promoting the Concept of Personhood in Practice*, produced and directed by Anju Joshi, is a 35-minute DVD that highlights a number of key issues related to personhood of older adults. Divided into 12 segments by topics, such as personhood defined and the role of care providers in promoting personhood, the DVD is intended to teach about personhood and how to apply personhood concepts in practice. The target audience includes students and health and social care providers working with older adults in community and long-term care settings.

In *Promoting the Concept of Personhood*, participants from multiple backgrounds and disciplines present thoughts about, and experiences with, issues concerning the personhood of older adults. Participants include older persons, care providers and clinicians, program managers, geriatricians, nurses, academics, and a gerontology alumnus. One participant, E. Mary Buzzell, a previous VON nurse who has led many caregiver support groups, has been teaching about personhood for more than 30 years. A vignette in a long-term care setting helps illustrate concepts of personhood such as the importance of knowing and appreciating past life experiences in order to understand present actions.

The DVD's first segments feature participants explaining their understanding of personhood, which reveals a wide range of definitions and also highlights that an individual's personhood evolves over time. Later segments and participant discussions focus on a number of concepts other than personhood, such as hope and optimism, vulnerability and exclusion, choice and risk, and powerlessness and autonomy. Although these concepts are certainly related to personhood, the link between these concepts and personhood could be more clearly articulated or explained. Similarly, the DVD's segment on valuing diversity – culture, ethnicity, and lifestyle, for instance – is accompanied by minimal discussion. Within the context of diversity, consideration of personhood, its meanings, characteristics, and implications for practice is vitally important given the varied nature of Canadian society and, indeed, of older adults.

Recent research and published literature on personhood has focused particularly on dementia among older adults (Kontos & Naglie, 2007; Malloy & Hadjistavropoulos, 2004; Murray & Boyd, 2009). Although the DVD briefly references personhood in dementia care, it would have been valuable if this topic were addressed in more detail, given the prevalence of dementia and the challenges associated with promoting personhood in such situations. For example, in Canada, researchers at the Centre for Research on Personhood in Dementia, led by Dr. Deborah O'Connor at the University of British Columbia, have been particularly active in this area, conducting a number of

studies and publishing papers and a book on the topic (O'Connor & Purves, 2009; O'Connor, Phinney, Smith, Small, Purves, Perry et al., 2007).

Whereas the concept of personhood has been the subject of widespread attention, much less regard has been accorded the strategies and approaches to promote personhood among older adults in health and social care contexts. The DVD advances this latter agenda in that participants, often through stories of personal experiences, identify a number of realistic and practical strategies that health and social care providers could use to promote personhood among older adults. Participants suggest important strategies that are otherwise not well identified in the literature, such as listening to and acknowledging metaphorical language used by older adults, and asking questions such as "What is most important for me to know about you?" and "When do you feel most like yourself?" Participants also explain the importance of exploring – with older adults, regardless of their age – these adults' dreams and hopes for the future. There is an important emphasis in the DVD, consistent with other literature, on focusing on people's strengths and assets rather than on their limitations, even when they are living with self-limiting conditions such as dementia.

The DVD also contains a short segment on a personhood-friendly workplace, where the power balance is flattened; where creativity, generosity, and resilience are fostered; where there is respectful teamwork and management support of staff, and where people can feel free, in effect, to be themselves. The idea of a personhood-friendly workplace has not received much attention in the literature, but similar concepts, such as healthy workplace environments which encompass these characteristics, have been described (e.g., Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, 2010). The notion of a personhood-friendly workplace is one that deserves more discussion and consideration, particularly when we recognize that the professionals who provide care to older adults are themselves an older and aging population and often work in environments that are insensitive to their own personhood.

The guide accompanying the DVD includes discussion questions for each section and a list of references. The questions can help viewers reflect on issues and experiences with personhood and can also be used to stimulate group discussion. The reference list contains classic references to the personhood literature but ends at the year 2000, thus missing more of the recent work that has been done, particularly in the area of dementia and personhood. Further, there is a rich body of literature about personhood in the areas of bioethics and philosophy (e.g., see the *American Journal of Bioethics*,

2007, volume 7, number 1) that would be likewise valuable to identify for viewers of the DVD. This latter body of literature reveals ongoing controversies about definitions and characteristics of personhood, how it can be assessed or measured, and why it is important. For example, controversy related to the definition of death and treatment decisions for vegetative patients is related to the differences in our views about criteria of personhood (Farah & Heberlein, 2007).

This DVD is a valuable and comprehensive introduction to the topic of personhood from multiple perspectives. Participants' personal stories add richness and will help students and providers better grasp how to integrate the concept of personhood in their practice. In closing, one of the DVD's quotes, stated by E. Mary Buzzell, is particularly apt: "We may know what is best for another person's health, but we are arrogant if we assume we know what is best for another person's life."

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