
“And Now... Whom Shall I Look After?” - Care As Perceived By Institutionalized And Non-Institutionalized Aged Women

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The demographic profile has altered the characteristics of aging in Brazil. This study aimed to investigate how elderly women perceive the care for others and for themselves, by comparing this perception to their present needs for care. Ten women aged 65 to 89 years divided into two groups - institutionalized and non-institutionalized - participated in the research as volunteers. Semi-structured interviews were accomplished and qualitatively analyzed. It was observed that the change of the “care-taker” role creates a void in the dominant perception, as these women become the object of someone else’s care. Nevertheless, they seem to become more committed to self-care. It was concluded that family, community activities and religion emerge as the main psychosocial support networks. Occupation and sociability influence the positive perception of care.