Bistrot Mémoire: a living experience

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In the beginning

• Remarking the narrow-minded approach of Dementia, exclusively focused on medical or social care, we were wishing to define a new type of relation between the caregivers and the elderly persons with dementia

• We imagined a community place, where anyone can freely come in and out, have some room to talk about theirs sufferings or simply to listen to each other
Professionnals and volunteers

• The Bistrot Mémoire has been conceived by a group of institutions and volunteers who share their observations and means
• It welcomes people with Dementia and their caregivers
• It is our collective duty to create conditions of “inclusion” in spite of the large exclusion movement produced by our public health policies, in order to involve citizens’ responsibilities in the future place of these people
A plaisant place in the city
To share good moments

• By creating the good conditions to welcome and preserve the relations between people with memory troubles, Alzheimer disease or assimilated forms and their family caregivers
• in a « café », « pub » (Bistrot), one afternoon per week
• For casual chats, share some good moments, eventually receive some information from professionals
Surprising!
Conversation and laughing in a public place, not stigmatized, inside of the city

- 3 weeks per month an outsider visitor talks about a subject, but it is not an information centre
- Once per month is free conversation
- Once a season is outdoors, sharing a lunch
- The Bistrot Mémoire is a place for people to share feelings, experiences and develop social ties. In a word: to socialize, as everyone
Examples of subjects

• Art and emotions
• Not just the same, not just another
• Why do we hesitate to ask for information?
• How to avoid crisis situation (a physician)
• We can dance
• This link that doesn’t die
• Yesterday and today’s songs
• The art of staying young (by volunteers)
• Understanding and communicating with the illness: Naomi Feil method
In « security » with a psychologist

• Our society is globally frightened by the elderly people, especially with the ones who have Alzheimer disease. Most people do not know how to speak to, and how to deal with such persons

• A psychologist welcomes people and coordinates actions with some regular volunteers
In order to give another image of Alzheimer’s

- Alzheimer’s is not only a disease; it is also a social issue
- Society has a certain image of Alzheimer’s disease
- Those have the disease can be viewed through another prism, not only through the prism of their illness
A place to have the opportunity to express themselves

- For those who suffer from memory troubles to express their thoughts and feelings about it
- For those who daily help them, to express the burden, but also the pleasure to discover another relation
- People with dementia are too often considered as unable to express themselves therefore people don’t listen to them
The missions

• To recognize the people suffering from Dementia,
• To encourage tolerance,
• To think over our point of view regarding these diseases,
• To support caregivers,
• To prevent crisis that might occur in the families bonds,
• To change professional practices
Principles and development

• The first Bistrot Mémoire was set up in January 2004 in Rennes and the experience has been developed in 16 other cities in Brittany, and 51 all over France

• The initial project has entailed the drafting of basic principles, including ethical principles

• Each new Bistrot Mémoire is supposed to create its own initiative in using these principles, in respect to the local projects and particularities
Bistrot Mémoire and French Public Policies

• The concept of “Bistrot Mémoire” has been first recognized by Foundations and Public Health Insurance, then by public administrations (city, department, region, state), and most recently by the French Alzheimer Plan 2008-2012, in guidelines for promoters who have chosen to settle such initiatives
For the future

• Since 2006, every year we share our experiences together with all the new Bistrot Mémoire. This way we evaluate our proposal and the different results observed in any place.

• We must be reactive and keep up the dynamic to contribute to the well being of both persons suffering from Alzheimer disease and caregivers.

• Respecting one’s freedom of thought is the key word, whether he/she is a professional or a layman.
We must keep on

• To avoid the individual disappears behind the disease.
• To change the negative image affects the quality of life of the sufferers and of those close to them
• To consider those have the disease as full citizens, with **rights, responsibilities and a social circle**, and take into account their experience in the light of these various perspectives
• To develop **empowerment and social inclusion**