

## **Educational File**

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Geriatric ward – September/October 2003

Elderly patients with Alzheimer's disease

Photo 1 – This woman sleeps on the ground because she is afraid of falling out of her bed.

Photo 2 – An auxiliary feeds an Alzheimer's patient.

Photo 3 – A nurse takes a blood sample from an Alzheimer's patient.

Photo 4 – It's 7 a.m. in the ward. The patients begin to wander the halls.

Photo 5 – It's 7 a.m. in the ward. After being washed, this woman is taken to the canteen for her breakfast.

Photo 6 – Alzheimer's patients sleep on the canteen tables.

Photo 7 – A nurse tries to talk to an Alzheimer's patient.

Photo 8 – A care assistant gives a patient a haircut.

Photo 9 – An Alzheimer's patient sleeps in his/her (??) room.

Photo 10 – It's 7 a.m. in the ward and there are only two care assistants looking after the numerous patients, many with Alzheimer's disease...

## **The Terrible State of Geriatric Care in France**

The heatwave in August 2003 took a heavy toll on the elderly, revealing the extreme vulnerability of the health care system.

In a report published by the Institute of Geriatric Health (l'institut de veille sanitaire), it is estimated that 81% of people 75 years of age or older died in geriatric wards during the heatwave.

This crisis reveals the weaknesses of the health care system for the elderly (lack of space, personnel, difficult working conditions, etc...)

The fact that people are living longer, while generally a good sign, has increased the problems associated with dependency to an alarming degree.

Today, the number of people who have lost their independence (partially or entirely) is estimated between 800 000 and 1.2 million. This number could increase by 80 % over the next forty years. Faced with such needs, it is necessary to increase the number of hospital beds, to increase the number of staff working with elderly patients and to establish a system for financial and logistic aid (outpatient services, retirement homes, homecare, personalized assistance to help patients achieve more independence...)

The awareness of weaknesses in care provision in this domain is not new. This summer's tragedy is a real disgrace for a country that boasts that it possesses the best health care service in the world.

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