

AUTONOMY AND SELF DETERMINATION OF AN ELDERLY POPULATION IN SOUTH BRAZIL

ALETHÉIA PETERS BAJOTTO; JOSÉ ROBERTO GOLDIM

Introduction: While the demographic transition leads us to a future of long-lived individuals, society seems to increasingly reduce the capacity of the elderly, underlining their fragile and dependent aspect. Some elderly members of a small community in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil were victims of fraudulent behavior by a group of criminals. It happened shortly before the development of a research project that evaluated quality of life and decision-making capacity. Such a crime was a significant trauma for the victims and, as a result, the participants of the research refused to sign the Informed Consent Form. Aim: report an unexpected and real situation experienced during a research, to illustrate the differences between two different concepts, widely studied in the bioethics field: autonomy and self-determination. Also, draws attention to the difficulties of obtaining scientific data from vulnerable populations. Results and Conclusions: We took an adverse situation during the beginning of the research and used it as background in order to demonstrate that, even in a situation where the elderly were restricted in their self-determination, autonomy remains. While the elderly were able to verbalize their intention to participate in the study, in fact, they were exercising their autonomy. When they said it was not possible to sign a document following family's order, renounced their self-determination.