

B. KLEIN. *Emotional robotics in promoting wellbeing in nursing care homes*. *Gerontechnology* 2012;11(2):412; doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.319.00 **Purpose** The mission of many nursing care homes, other than providing good quality of care, is to contribute to the quality of life and well-being of their residents. A range of professional groups such as nursing care staff, social workers, and/or occupational therapists, and others are committed in their work to apply a range of methods and tools in order to accommodate the needs of the chronically ill and often multimorbid residents. Recently, emotional robots have become available that can be applied in robot-therapy¹, a new approach where robots are utilized for vulnerable groups for cognitive and social stimulation as well as recreation. Our objective is to show tentative results of utilizing emotional robots in nursing care homes in the area of Frankfurt in the State of Hesse, Germany².

Method Since 2009 the Fachhochschule Frankfurt am Main (The Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences), undertakes teaching research projects with emotional robots such as the therapeutic seal PARO and the toy dinosaur PLEO in the social work bachelor course. The aim is to get an indication of the robot's effects and suitability for therapeutic approaches in the care for the elderly. Students have to do project work in teams of three to five persons over a four-week period. Informed consent is obtained from residents or their legal custodian. The project group undertakes at least three sessions with residents using PARO or PLEO, they video the sessions, analyze the data, write a project report, and do a presentation. Up to now eleven reports have been analyzed with respect to the observed effects. A total of 62 residents have been involved in this explorative, qualitative, work. **Results & Discussion** Results of the reports show that the vast majority of the residents enjoyed the robots and appreciated the sessions. Their reactions can be characterized by: physical contact, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, and communication and recreation/ enjoyment. These tentative results will be analyzed in terms of to what extent they can contribute to methodological and conceptual discussions e.g. such as Thiersch's³ socio-pedagogical approach of 'Lebensweltorientierung' (orientation to living conditions), or concepts such as biography work with a range of methods and tools or occupational therapy⁴.

References

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