



Care for institutionalized elderly suffering from dementia with regard to their intimacy and sexuality needs

A philosophical-ethical analysis

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INTRODUCTION

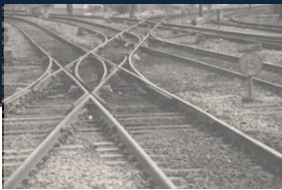
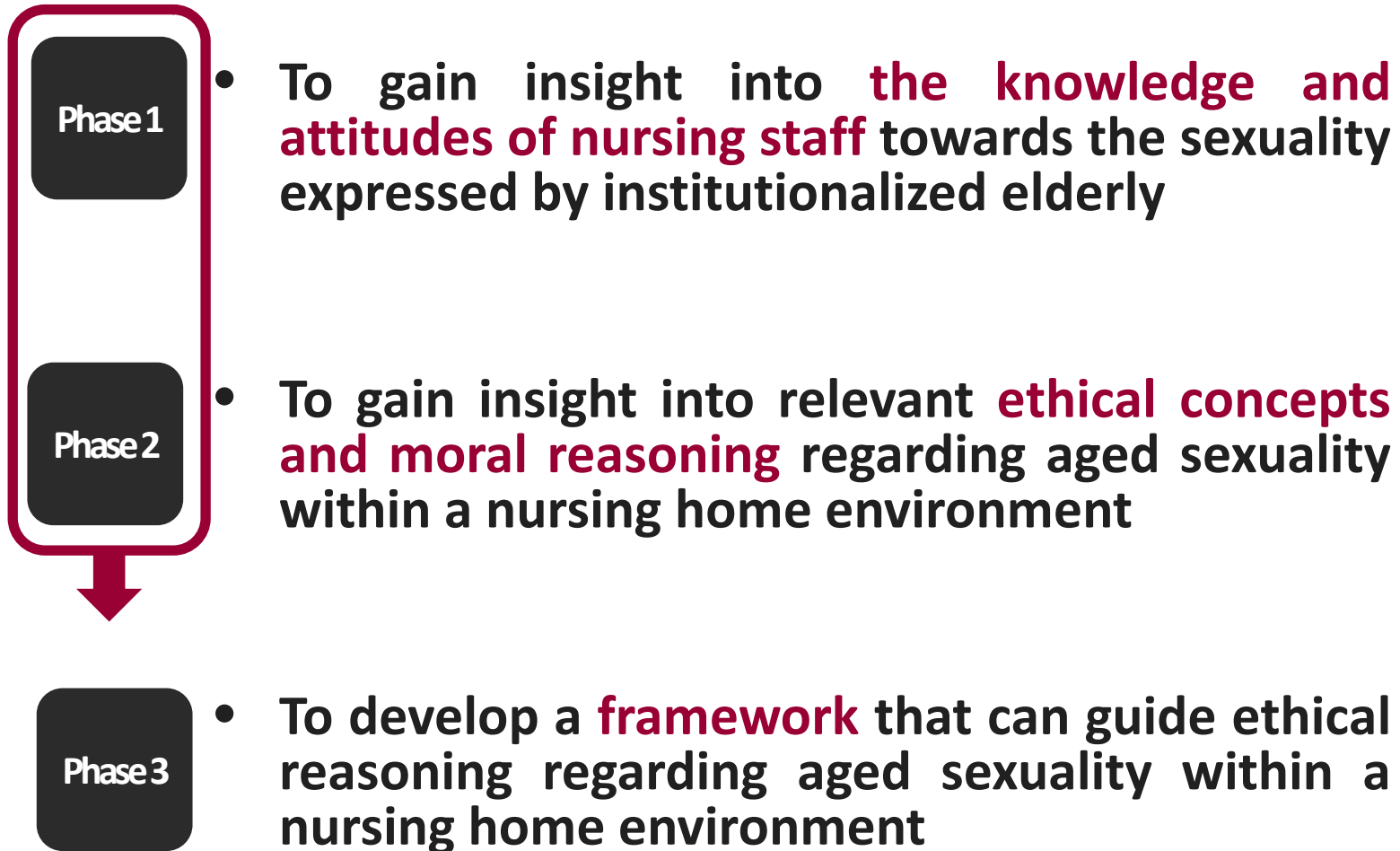
sexuality in elderly residents = a troubling issue

- **The potential vulnerability of institutionalized elderly**
- **The taboo nature of aged sexuality**
- **Pathological ⇔ non-pathological sexual behavior**

☞ **Wide variety of ethical issues and legal concerns**

☞ **Ethical guidelines are rare and often inadequate**

OBJECTIVES



METHODOLOGY

Normative approach

Phase 2

Phase 3

Empirical approach

Phase 1



PHASE 1

Empirical approach

Knowledge and attitudes of nursing staff

Literature review



Instrument development



Survey study



Empirical approach

Literature review

Objective

To analyze the empirical literature on this issue

Design

Electronic database search: Medline, Cinahl, Psychinfo, Web of Science, Philosophers Index, Google Scholar, and Invert

Findings

Quantitative studies: - knowledge 

- attitudes 

- correlations = no consensus

Qualitative studies: - attitudes 





Empirical approach

Instrument development

Objective

To test the content and face validity and internal consistency of the Dutch version of the ASKAS

Findings

Content validity 

Face validity 

User-friendliness 

Reliability 





Empirical approach

Survey study

Objective

To gain insight into the knowledge and attitudes of Flemish nursing staff

Design

Descriptive correlational study – Cross-sectional survey

Instrument: ASKAS (adapted and translated version)

Research setting: Flemish nursing homes

Population: all nursing staff employed by Flemish nursing homes

Sample: 2x101 nursing homes (stratified random sample)

Preliminary Findings

Response rate: 150/202 nursing homes [43 positive responses]
1192/2228 nurses





Normative approach

PHASE 2

**Ethical concepts and
moral reasoning**

**Argument-based
literature review**



**Philosophical-ethical
analysis**



Normative approach

Argument-based literature review

Objective

To explore the ethical concepts and arguments grounding the debate on aged sexuality within a nursing home environment

Design

Electronic database search: Medline, Cinahl, Embase, Psychinfo, Web of Science, Philosophers' Index, Atla, Invert and Google Scholar

Findings

Related to principles

- **Respect for autonomy !**
- Non-maleficence
- Beneficence
- Justice

Related to care

- Care
- Dignity
- Vulnerability
- Singularity
- Historicity
- Relationality
- **Embodiment?**





Normative approach

Philosophical-ethical analysis

Objective

To broaden the ethical concepts and arguments grounding the debate on aged sexuality within a nursing home environment

Design

Literature study

Merleau-Ponty, Zaner, Levinas,...

Preliminary findings

Anthropological foundation:

- *The decentered self*
- *Human embodiment*
- *Being-in-the-world*
- ...





Normative approach

The decentered self

The self is not something we can ever possess since it is “irremediably infected with an otherness” that despite its fundamental inaccessibility constitutes our “own”-ness.¹



Normative approach

Human embodiment

It is through our lived bodies that we can manifest ourselves to the world.

- tacit knowledge
- to touch and to be touched
 - the body at risk
- the abyss of being no-body
 - illness
 - old age
 - from transparency to an obstinate force



Being-in-the-world

“The world is not what I think,
but what I live through” ²

Normative approach



embodied habits and practices



PHASE 3

Ethical framework

Applied ethical analysis

Practical guidelines



Applied ethical analysis

Objective

To develop an ethical framework based on:

- ✓ **phase 1** (empirical research)
- ✓ **phase 2** (philosophical-ethical reflection)

Practical guidelines

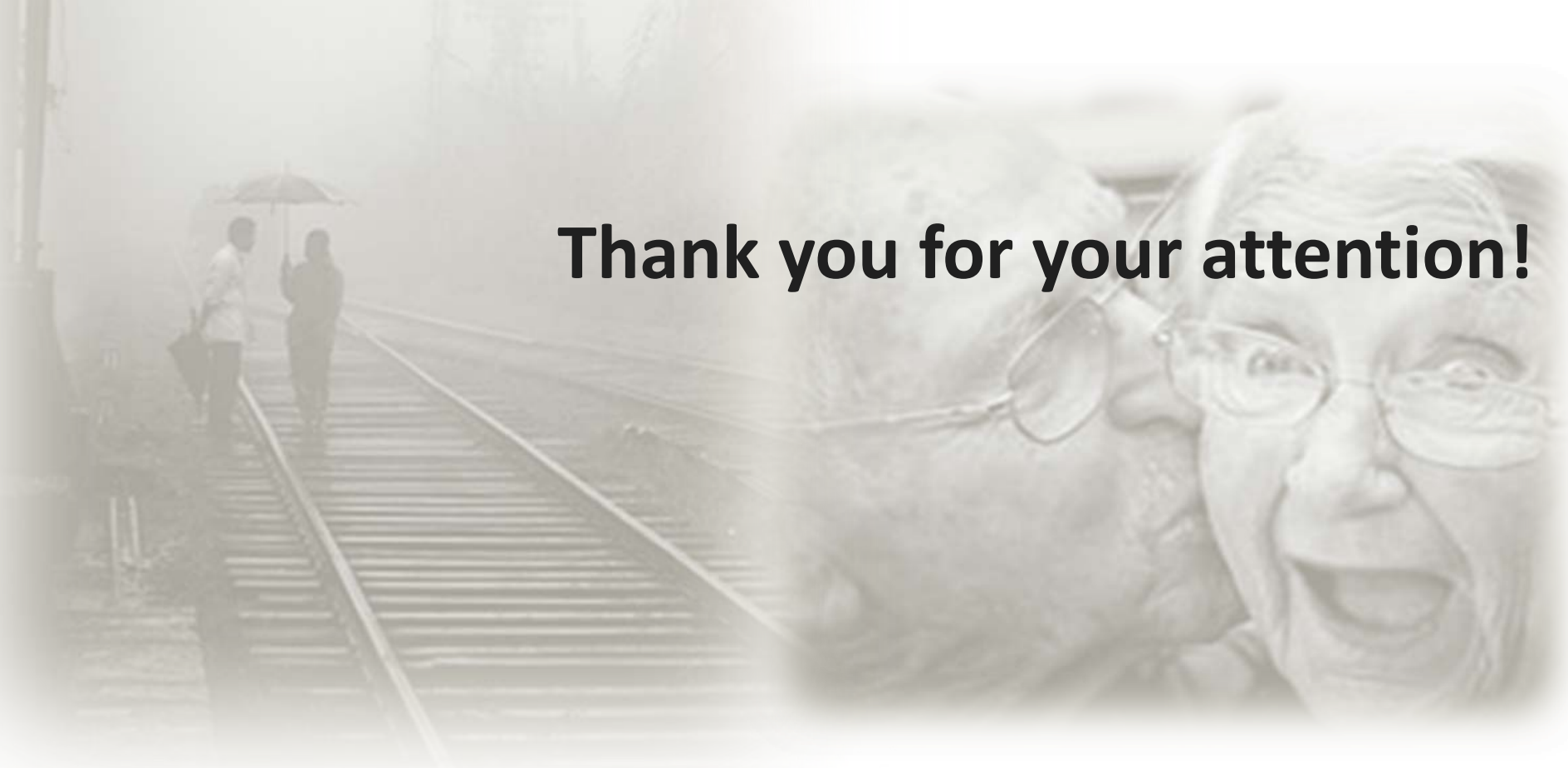
Objective

To develop some practical guidelines that can be used by nursing homes to optimize patient care





Thank you for your attention!





References

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¹Visker, R. (2005). The Strange(r) Within Me. *Ethical Perspectives* 12(4): 425-441.

²Merleau-Ponty, M. (1981). *Phenomenology of perception*, translated by Colin Smith, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.