

A New Instrument for the Standardization of Staffing Ratios in German Nursing Homes and its practical implications

Symposium

“Neue Impulse für die Rolle von Pflegekräften bei einer
fachgerechten Versorgung ältere Menschen”

am Japanisch-Deutschen Zentrum Berlin
am 6.2.2020

Prof. Dr. Heinz Rothgang
Universität Bremen

SOCIUM Forschungszentrum Ungleichheit und Sozialpolitik

- I. Background
- II. Legal framework
- III. Data and methods
- IV. Some results
- V. Next steps to take
- VI. Implications for stakeholders
- VII. Summary

I. Background

- In Germany, staffing ratios in care homes vary by up to 15% from one federal state to another – without reasonable justification.
- Staffing levels are consistently described as too low – without any direct evidence.
- Surveys on nursing staff, however, reveal
 - workplace stress,
 - job dissatisfaction, and
 - early job exits due to understaffing as well as
 - claims of compensatory negative effects on quality of care.
- There is some need for a *standardised method to identify suitable staffing levels*.

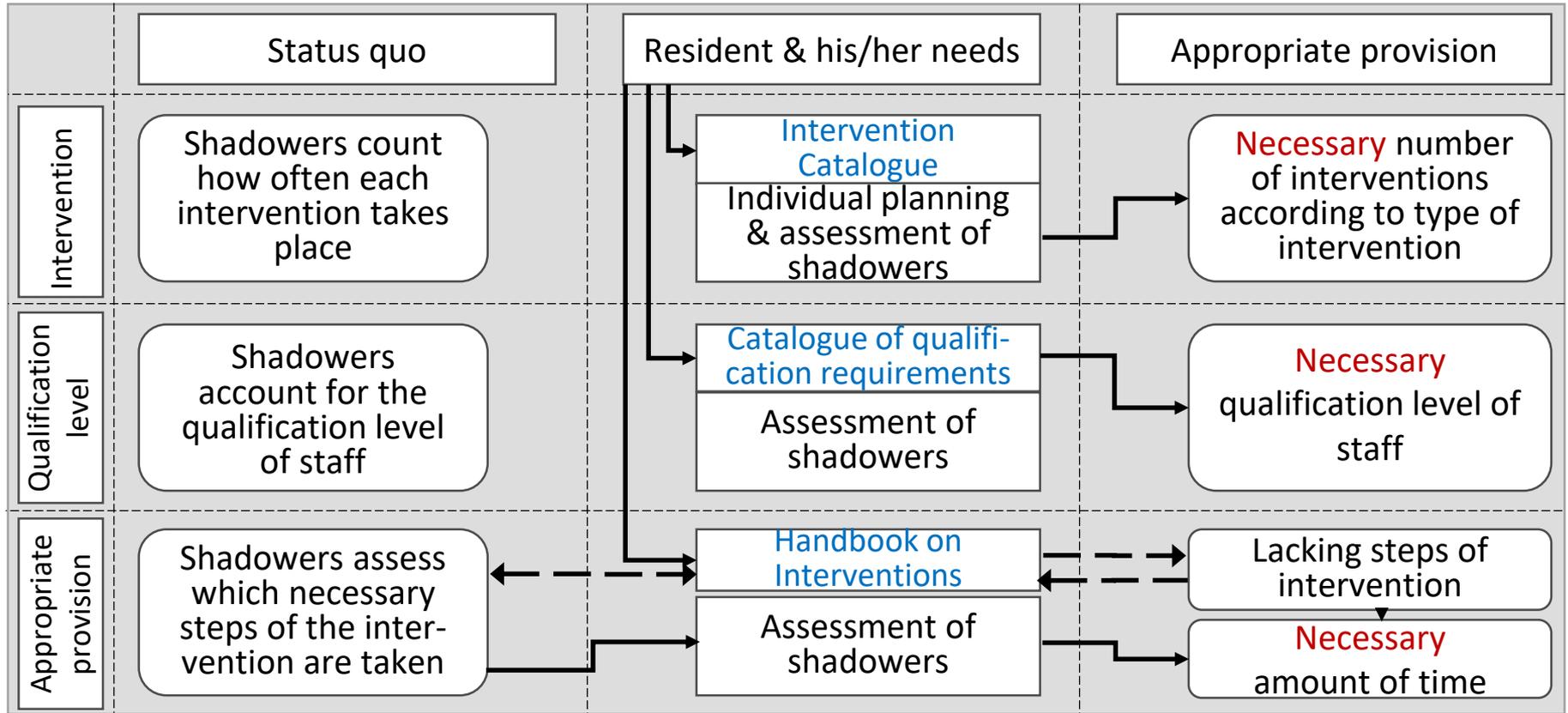
II. Legal framework

- The University of Bremen was commissioned to *develop* and *test* a standardized method by June 2020, in accordance with § 113c of the German Social Code, Book XI.
- Partners of the Concerted Action on LTC have meanwhile agreed to *introduce* results of the proposed method.
- The Health Ministry and the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth have jointly agreed to
 - draw up a roadmap with the relevant actors, and
 - present a white paper for the enactment of appropriate statutory provisions in Book XI of the German Social Code.

III. Data and methods

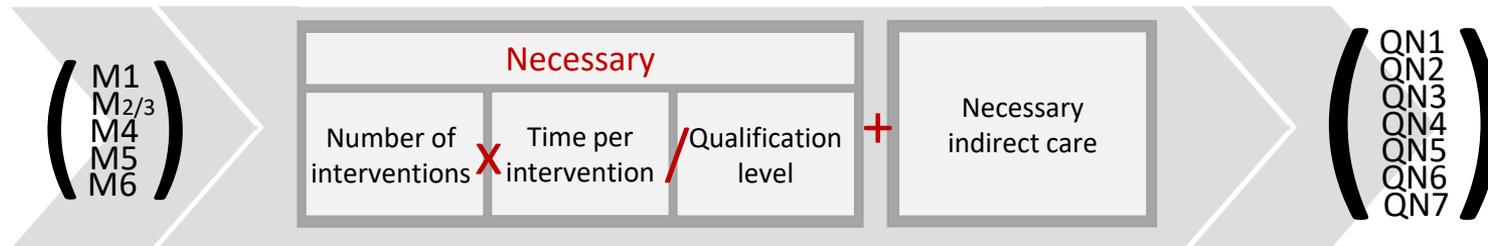
- The standardised method is based on an observational study
 - in 62 units of nursing homes
 - with 1.380 residents and
 - 241 study nurses shadowing the nursing staff and
 - collecting data on more than 140.000 interventions.
- Within the study the current state of service provision is
 - documented (status quo) and
 - evaluated against a set of norms about “good” care provision that was beforehand developed, discussed with experts and then agreed upon by the commissioners of the study, including the two ministries involved.

III. Data and methods



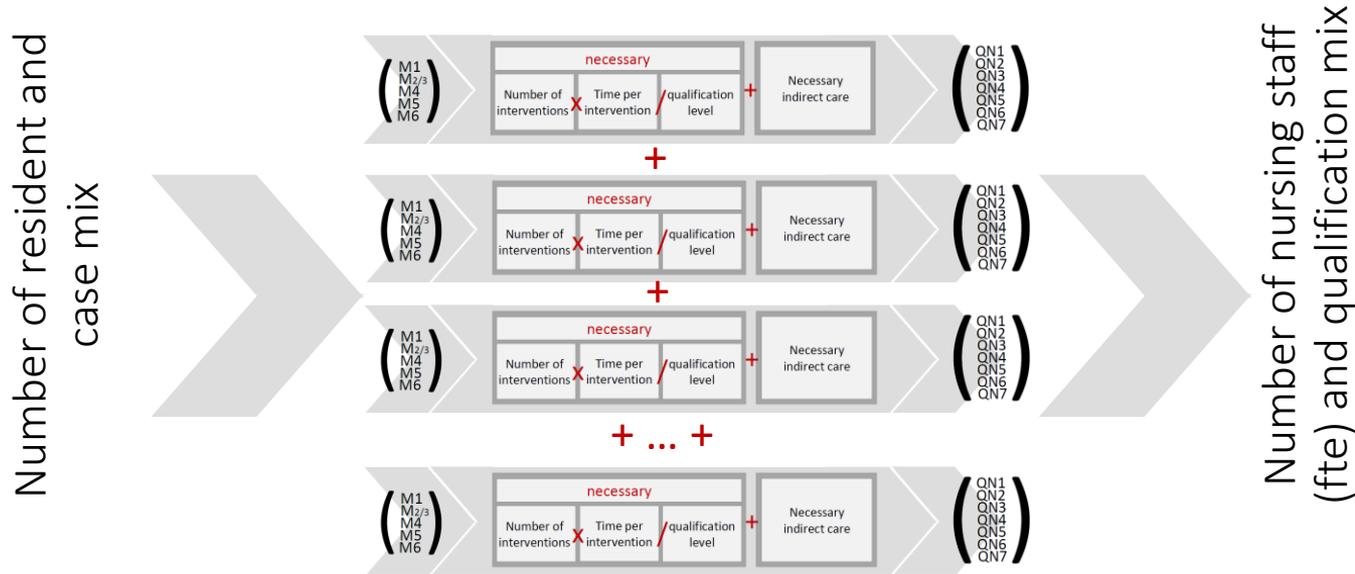
III. Data and methods

- The amount of necessary time for nursing tasks for a specific resident characterised by the results of his assessment can be computed as necessary amount of (distinct) interventions times the necessary time for this intervention for the respective qualification level.
- Classifying all residents into care grades an average amount of time can be calculated.
- Based on the available working hours of the nursing personal the number of staff can be calculated in full-time equivalents.



III. Data and methods

- The staffing patterns for a nursing home are computed as the sum of necessary staff for each resident.



IV. Some results

- Substantial *deficits* were identified both in the volume of required interventions and the time taken to provide them.
- These can be translated into *additional staff requirements*. On average there is
 - additional demand for assistants *and* unskilled staff
 - *higher additional demand for assistants and unskilled staff* than for registered nurses.
- Hence, – on average – the resulting *ratio* of registered nurses to assistants is *lower* than the current statutory ratio.

IV. Some Results

- Specific skill mixes for *individual* LTC units based on the structure of their residents (amount of need of LTC) shall replace overall quotas for the whole sector.
- Resulting skill mixes require a more skills-oriented *organisation* of the care process.
- In future, registered nurses should concentrate on planning, instruction, supervision and evaluation and complex nursing tasks, while less skilled staff takes care of simple nursing tasks.
- *Human resources development and organisational development* processes are essential to this end.

IV. Next steps to take

- What has already been done?
 - Development phase has been completed by September 2019.
 - A second interim report on the development phase has been presented to the commissioners and will be approved soon.
 - An interview study with stakeholders to test the results and identify necessary requirements for implementation has been started in November 2019 and will be completed by April 2020.
- Our recommendation for the future from June 2020 onwards:
 - Pilot implementation in a limited number of LTC units open and willing to change over a number of years; at the same time
 - initial steps to increase staffing in all nursing homes.

- Increased staffing patterns
 - reduce the workload for LTC staff,
 - might also reduce sick leave,
 - and prevent premature retirement.
- Together with better pay this increases the attractiveness of the job and thus makes increased recruitment possible.
- Skills-based work (re-)organisation implies that the LTC staff must be willing to re-define their professional roles and accept new divisions of labour.

- Improved staffing patterns ensure the sustained provision of good-quality care, in line with the new understanding of the care process triggered by the new legal definition of the need for care introduced 2017.
- Without a financing reform of the LTCI, however, increased costs have to be paid by residents alone. Resulting co-payment will undoubtedly exceed the economic potentials of the majority of residents.

- It is crucial that ongoing concerted efforts are made to *recruit, regain and retain* sufficient personnel – on a long-term basis.
- To this end bold steps have to be taken with respect to registered nurses *and* care assistants.
- A reform of LTCI financing must accompany the implementation of new staffing patterns.
- The provided algorithm yields staffing patterns that should be regarded as the base of negotiations on the level of each nursing home – not as the result of such negotiations.

VII. Summary

- Nurse shortages in LTC remain the central obstacle to implementing improved staff ratios.
- To overcome this shortage, both remuneration and staff numbers in nursing homes must be improved, making nursing careers more attractive and sustainable.
- Increased daily rates in nursing homes arising from the aforementioned measures cannot be borne by residents alone.
- It is essential that these costs are distributed fairly – hence there is need for a LTCl financing reform as well.

Many thanks for your attention!