

You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

DOCTOR OF ADULT EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

of Ms. Ann Claeys

Which will take place on **October 14, 2024 at 5 PM** (Brussels Time)
Building U – VUB Main Campus Brussels
Pleinlaan 2 – 1050 Brussel

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE CARE: PERCEPTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

JURY

INTERN:

Prof. Dr. Koen Lombaerts (Chair)
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Prof. Dr. Lieve Van den Block (Vrije)
Universiteit Brussel)

Dr. Rose-Lima Van Keer (Vrije)
Universiteit Brussel)

EXTERN:

Prof. Dr. Isabelle Godin (Université libre de Bruxelles)

Prof. Dr. Juan Manuel Leyva Moral (Universitat Autònoma De Barcelona)

Mrs. Naziha Maher (Expert people with a migration background at Kom op Tegen Kanker)

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Liesbeth De Donder (Vrije)
Universiteit Brussel)

Coming by car? Please [register your licence plate in advance](#) to have access to the campus.

You are also invited to the reception afterwards.

Please confirm your attendance before October 9 via this [link](#).

How to reach the VUB? Click for [directions](#).

SUMMARY

This dissertation examines culturally sensitive care from the perspective of healthcare providers and informal carers, leading to the development of an educational module to enhance nursing students' cultural awareness. Demographic and societal changes, such as ageing and increased diversity, have reshaped the profile of the patient in Belgium, bringing new challenges to the healthcare system. Current care models have reached their limitations, highlighting the need for integrated and culturally sensitive solutions. Culturally sensitive care is seen as a solution for healthcare challenges and inequalities, despite the implementation difficulties.

The research focuses on three main questions: (1) How do healthcare providers define, experience, and deliver culturally sensitive care? (2) How do informal carers of patients with a migration background experience professional care? (3) How can future healthcare providers be trained to become culturally sensitive professionals? Different qualitative research methods were used, including focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with healthcare providers, students, and informal carers. Based on these insights, a four-hour educational module was developed, implemented, and evaluated in a bachelor's nursing program.

The results show that healthcare providers have a narrow and stereotypical perception of culturally sensitive care, often reduced to practical actions and attention to religious practices, which can lead to culturally *insensitive* care. Some healthcare providers do approach culturally sensitive care from a relationship-oriented perspective, but these initiatives are not supported by the healthcare organization. Informal carers of older patients with a migration background seek professional help but experience an additional burden as they try to bridge the gaps in professional care. Training can enhance the self-awareness of nursing students. The positive impact of the developed module suggests it can be a foundation for further training. Four themes occur throughout the three research questions: 'caring & uncaring encounters,' 'othering' and discrimination, the optional character of culturally sensitive care, and structural shortcomings in the healthcare system.

These findings underscore the need to address 'othering', discrimination, and exclusion. Integrating cultural competence into healthcare curricula and promoting an open policy against discrimination are essential. Policies must ensure inclusive, high-quality care, with culturally sensitive care as a fundamental principle, not merely an option, in line with the diversity of society.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Ann Claeys obtained her Bachelor's degree in Nursing in 2003 and her Master's degree in Gerontology in 2006. Her nursing experience is primarily focused on care for older adults, with work experience in both intramural and extramural care settings. She shares her extensive knowledge and experience as a lecturer and researcher in the professional Bachelor's program in Nursing at Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts. While working, she began doctoral research into cultural competencies among healthcare providers as an unpaid employee at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. In 2023, she received a special doctoral grant from Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek to complete her research within a year. The results of her research have been published (or submitted) in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and disseminated through valorisation papers, book chapters, and presentations at national and international conferences. Ann has contributed her insights as co-author of the 'Werkboek Cultuursensitieve Zorg' (2016) and the book 'Dementie bij ouderen met een migratieachtergrond' (Dutch edition 2021, French edition 2022).