

FORUM

The Stiegmeyer-Group's company magazine



Ethical principles for a good life in old age

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For many people in need of care, the radius of life at some stage contracts to one spot: their care bed. Here they spend day and night, here they sleep, eat and communicate. The importance of this bed for life in old age cannot be emphasised enough. This is why Stiegmeyer, Burmeier and other care bed manufacturers have now published a declaration in the industrial association SPECTARIS in which they commit themselves to ethical guidelines.

Joint declaration of care bed manufacturers in the German SPECTARIS industrial association for the sectors of optics, photonics, analytical and medical devices

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"Our beds are available for people in difficult life situations and help them to age with more self-determination and dignity," says Ralf Wiedemann, Managing Director at Stiegmeyer and member of the SPECTARIS Medical Devices Board. For him and his fellow specialists, it is therefore important that care beds also comply with the principles of the German Care Charter of 2005. This charter defines the conditions for a dignified life in old age – for example, self-determination, protection against injury and neglect, the right to privacy and participation in communication and social appreciation.



Ralf Wiedemann, Managing Director at Stiegmeyer and member of the SPECTARIS Medical Devices Board, played a significant role in the creation of the declaration.

Balancing protection and freedom

What role do care beds play with regard to these requirements? In their declaration of ethics, for example, the manufacturers commit themselves to a balanced relationship "between the best possible protection of the resident against falls, while at the same time maintaining a high degree of freedom and self-determination". In fact, modern technology helps to achieve this goal. Split safety sides protect the resident without preventing him or her from leaving the bed. Low-height beds also prevent injuries from falls without the need for measures that deprive people of their freedom.

Another important point of the ethics declaration: the beds are to "support nursing staff and caregiving relatives in their daily tasks". Here too, there is already a great deal of technical assistance for everyday life. Back-friendly work with the bed is made possible by a large height adjustment range. Smooth-running safety sides, intuitive handsets and good manoeuvrability of the bed save the nursing staff's strength and time. There is great potential for the future in digital assistance systems – out-of-bed systems are already relieving the strain on staff considerably.



Together for ethics in nursing care – this memorable seal serves as a symbol of ethical commitment.

Fresh concepts for homelike atmosphere and individuality

At first glance, the demand that care beds should contribute "to homelike comfort at the point of care" seems plausible and self-evident. However, homelike care beds are a fairly recent invention – until the end of the 20th century, many nursing home residents lay in hospital beds with a technical appearance. Fortunately, a lot has happened here in recent years. Softcovers and fixed upholstery, a wide range of beautiful wood decors as well as head and footboards that can be exchanged without tools give care beds an individuality that no longer lags behind high-quality designer beds from the furniture retail trade. The right to a personal space is realised here on an aesthetic level.

Other aspects of the joint declaration include the safety of the beds and the environmental compatibility of their manufacture. Both have always enjoyed top priority within the Stiegmeyer-Group. Managing Director Ralf Wiedemann is confident that all participating companies will stand by the voluntary pledge: "We want to show how manufacturers of care beds can implement the ethical requirements of the Care Charter in the functionalities of a care bed for the benefit of those in need of care as well as the nursing staff and caregiving

relatives," he said. He added that "from an ethical and moral point of view, there is a duty not to launch a care bed on the market with only minimal equipment and quality due to short-term economic considerations".

A visible sign of the declaration is the label "Together for ethics in nursing care". It shows in blue and green colour a care scenario at the bed. The resident and the caregiver face each other gently – as a symbol for a good life in old age, to which the SPECTARIS specialist group for hospital and care beds would like to contribute.