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Ethical issues of clowning with elderly people living at home

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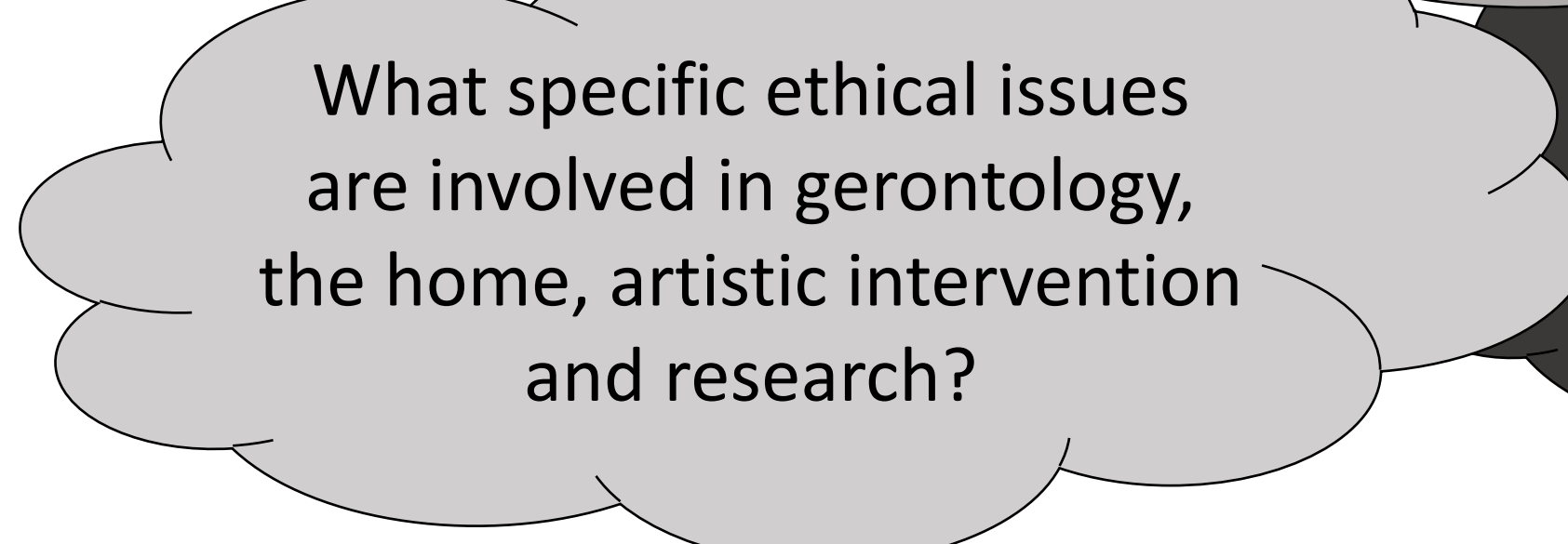
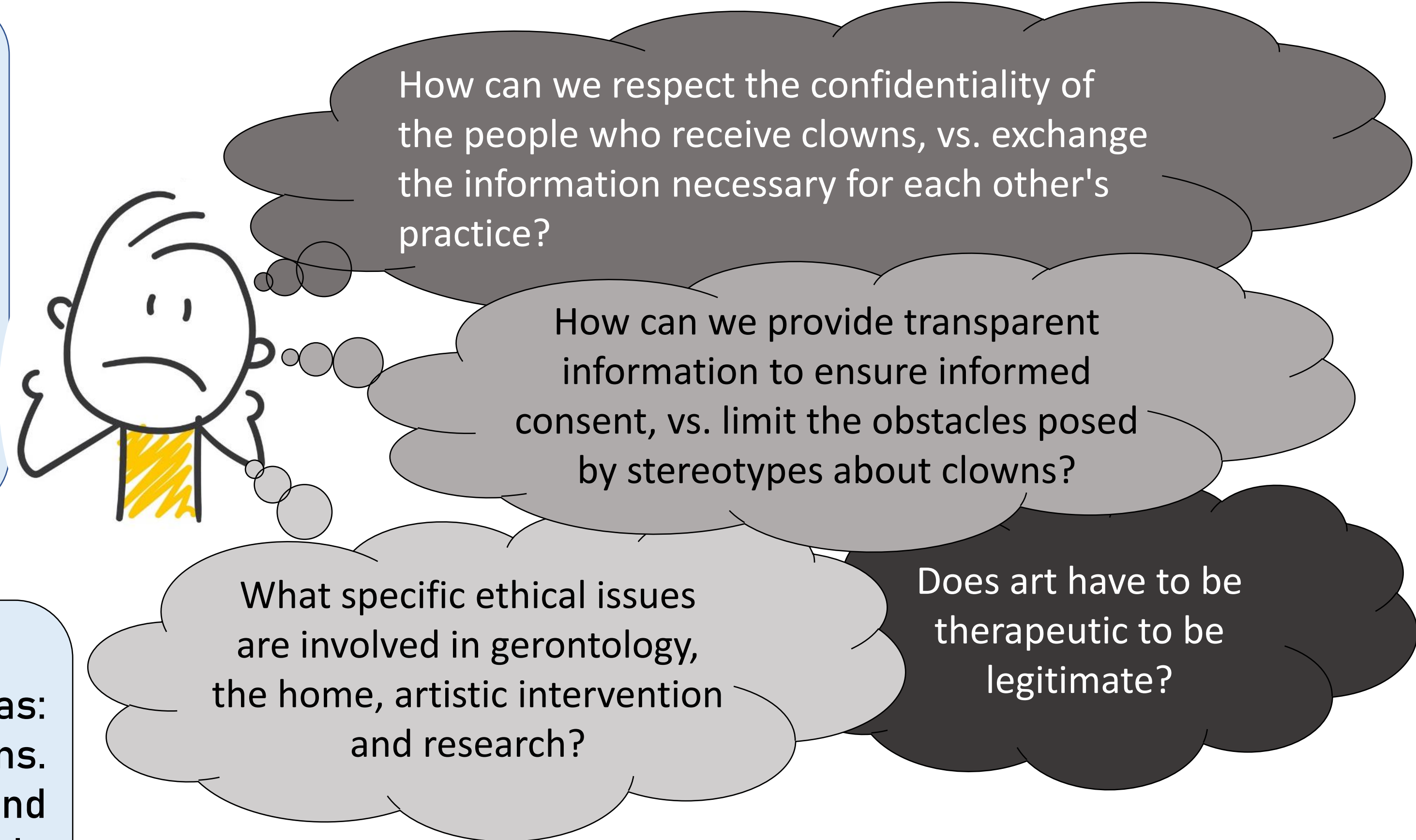
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Introduction

Clowning at home with an elderly public is currently being tested in four departments of the Occitanie region. These clowns work in pairs at individuals' homes, who were previously identified by local partners: social workers, home help services, local representatives, etc. The implementation of these interventions raises several ethical questions. The confluence of different worlds - artistic, medico-social, intimate - requires clarification of the needs, expectations, values and obligations of each party.

Method

Non-systematic synthesis of the literature on ethics in 3 areas: gerontology, home care and artistically mediated interventions. Research in English and French, using the following databases and search engines: PsychINFO, Medline, PubMed, PubPsych and Google Scholar, and analysis of references cited in the articles selected.



1. Ethics and ageing?

Ethical issues are particularly present in situations of loss of autonomy, especially when neuro-evolutionary diseases are involved. Is a specific ethic needed to support people experiencing ageing problems?

Confusion between loss of autonomy and dependency (Ennuyer, 2002)

Over-emphasis on autonomy (Le Coz, 2020)

No specific ethics for ageing, but ethical issues linked to the care relationship. (Folscheid, 2013)

Importance of considering vulnerabilities and interdependence (Pelluchon, 2008)

2. Staying at home is seen as the ultimate expression of a person's freedom of choice, a true ideal of life. But ageing at home is not necessarily synonymous with quality of life and can require a great deal of help and adaptations.

Home culture: desire to control one's own space + maintain a positive self-image + develop sociability (Djaoui, 2011)

Ethical conflicts specific to the home (autonomy vs. welfare and safety) (Loew et al., 2019)

A philosophy of care still influenced by the Henderson-Maslow theory, in which needs are dictated by the caregivers. What about desires? (Pellissier, 2006)

3. Ethics and artistic interventions ?

In France, art therapy covers a wide range of realities. Are we talking about art therapy, artistic mediation, occupational or leisure activities?

According to Colignon's (2017) definitions, clown interventions in the home can be described as "artistic mediation".

To what extent is the practice of hospital clowns based on institutional standards? Can this practice be transposed to the home?

4. needs or habits?

Some home care services are transpositions from institutional practice. The standards, approaches and code of ethics of the various professionals are sometimes unsuited to home care.

In the context of home care, the transmission of information about a person cannot be the same as in an institution.

The consent of beneficiaries is sometimes difficult to interpret because it is intertwined with relationships with family and friends, or with professionals who are the only regular visitors for some people.

The deontology code for art therapists in France and that of hospital clowns have in common respect for the individual and the confidentiality of information concerning him or her, and a concern to clarify the position of the intervening artist.

Ethics code of various professionals, their rights and duties, and their professional obligations, differ and sometimes even clash.

This research's framework imposes constraints on the interventions. It has helped to clarify everyone's positions. However, to what extent has this framework transformed, or even affected, the clowns' practice? If so, how can we assess its effects? Moreover, because of the research protocol, we are conducting interviews with the participants in the study. This provides an opportunity to talk about what happens during the clowns' visits. To what extent does this not transform the artistic interventions into a therapeutic space?

Ethical issues therefore need to be rethought, considering the home context, in order to intervene without causing harm, and without getting lost in the other person's needs or pressures.

Let's cultivate doubt and curiosity, so as to be able to meet other !

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