Is the evaluation of patients' and caregivers' psycho-social aspects an integral part of the diagnosis of dementia?

Vasilis Pappas, Neurologist
Eleni Margioti, Clinical Neuropsychologist
Athens Alzheimer’s Association

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Definition:

- Group of symptoms that can be caused by over 60-70 disorders.
- Syndrome which refers to progressive decline in intellectual functioning severe enough to interfere with person’s normal daily activities and social relationships.
Dementia

Marked by progressive decline in:

- Memory
- Executive function
- Constructional Praxis
- Attention
- Logical reasoning
- Language
- Orientation
- Mood
Activities compromised in dementia

• Daily activities
• ADLs: bathing, toileting, transfer, dressing, eating
• IADLs (executive functioning):
  o Maintaining household
  o Shopping
  o Transportation
  o Finances
How is dementia diagnosed?

Doctors can diagnose dementia using tools such as:

- Detailed case history
- Physical, psychiatric, neurological examination
- Laboratory work up (blood tests, brain scans)
- Neuropsychological evaluation
- Asking questions about the person’s general health, any past medical problems and the ability to do daily activities
Psychosocial factors

- Psychosocial: implicating the way social environment and individual’s emotional state interact with each other.
- Family ties
- Friendship ties
- Participation in local groups
- Trust among members of a community
- Attachment to neighbourhood
- Tolerance to different ethnic-religious variations
- Being able to rely on others
Risk factors of dementia

- Age >65 years old
- Genetic factors
- Environmental factors (blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, diet, smoking, alcohol dependence)
- Head trauma
- Down syndrome
- Depression, mental illness
Risk factors that compromise psychosocial involvement

- decreased support from partner
- decreased social support and participation
- dysfunctional families
- the western type of life
- exposure to violence
- exposure to racial/ethnic discrimination.
- lack of religiosity
Coping with psychosocial compromise of patients and caregivers

- Non-pharmacological interventions = good emotional state and an active social life
- Decrease the use of medication that are potentially harmful for the elderly.
- Pay attention to the needs of attendants and caregivers.
  - Spouses provide unpaid care for an average of 19 hours per day
  - Only, a small percentage of family caregiver (30.9%) share caring responsibilities with a paid caregiver.
  - Caregivers use antidepressants 3 times more than the general population.
Dealing with psychosocial aspects

Day care centers – Home care program

- Adult day care centers offer socialization and activities for people with Alzheimer's and a break for caregivers.

Education and support for caregivers & Psychiatric Clinic for caregivers

- The Association organizes at a regular base educational seminars for caregivers (8 sessions/2 hours each). During the seminars they are taught how to deal with the practical and psychological burden of dementia.

- These programmes focus on caregivers’ specific needs (dementia symptoms, progression and available treatments etc.)
Dealing with psychosocial aspects

Peer support group

- In 2014, Athens Association of Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders (AAADRD) introduced a volunteer peer support service for family carers for the first time in Greece.
- Participants state that they gain a lot of emotional and practical support from peer support workers and from other peers in the group.
- They discover that their role as carers is meaningful and interesting, and they feel motivated to continue.
Thank you for your attention