

Short Note on Older Adults with Dementia

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Editorial

Dementia is one of the most serious health and social care issues confronting the world today. Globally, an estimated 50 million people are currently living with dementia, with a threefold increase predicted by the year 2050. Dementia is characterised by a decline in memory and other mental abilities. Dementia affects as many as 7% of adults aged 60 and older. Dementia can cause symptoms other than problems with memory, language, and decision-making abilities. Changes in mood, such as increased irritability, depression, and anxiety, are examples. Changes in personality and behaviour are also included [1].

Dementia, a neurodegenerative disorder, is characterised by a chronic decline in cognitive and motor functions that worsens with age. The United Kingdom (UK) has a high prevalence of disease, with the most recent figures indicating that an estimated 850,000 people have dementia. With the population share of later-life age groups over the age of 65 years predicted to increase to 19.8 million over the next 50 years, the burden of age-related disease, including the challenges presented by dementia, is on the rise. The prevalence is expected to exceed two million people by 2051, significantly increasing the existing economic burden of dementia, which is estimated to be £26.3 billion per year to the national economy [2]. People are retaining more of their natural teeth due to a concurrent shift in the oral health profile of older adults.

According to the most recent Adult Dental Health Survey conducted in the United Kingdom in 2009, 53 percent of adults over the age of 85 have retained an average of 14 natural teeth. In addition, the proportion of 'edentate' adults had dropped to 6%, an all-time low. As a result, the link between dementia and oral health is a major concern in an ageing society, because good oral health is an essential component of active ageing, social participation, communication, and overall well-being [3].

Although research, albeit limited in volume, suggests that dementia is associated with poor oral health, a number of recent systematic reviews emphasise that the nature and direction of the association remain unknown. There is a greater understanding of the oral health issues associated with dementia, such as tooth loss, periodontal disease risk, caries risk, and an increased prevalence of orofacial pain. Furthermore, growing evidence

suggests a link between oral health problems, overall poor health, and frailty in people with dementia, which is linked to systemic inflammatory responses, Medication use, dietary changes, and malnutrition [4].

People with dementia, like those with other neurodegenerative disorders or disabilities, have a reduced ability to maintain their oral health. Their ability to care for their oral and general health is hampered by the loss of cognitive and motor functions. Access to regular dental services and professional care is also becoming increasingly difficult as dementia progresses, owing to a rapid decline in health [5]. Dementia-specific issues, such as communication barriers, resistance, and behavioural difficulties, further limit the type of care that can be provided. As a result, people living with dementia are at risk of having poorer oral health and have higher treatment needs, but their access to timely care and the type of care they receive is more limited than the general population.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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