

A PSYCHOSOCIAL PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH EARLY ONSET DEMENTIA TO REDUCE STRESS, ANXIETY AND SLEEP PROBLEMS.

Background

People with diagnosed early onset dementia (EOD) often suffer from increased stress and anxiety which in turn results in sleep problems, a lower wellbeing and a decreased quality of life for the person with EOD and their informal caregivers [1,2]. The current care facilities for people with EOD are nowadays mostly focused on the physical care of the person with EOD and not so much on the mental or emotional guidance [3]. Which is to be expected, given that care providers often miss the right knowledge and skills to do so.

Aim(s)

This aims of this project are threefold: (1) to develop a psychosocial program on stress, anxiety and sleep problems; (2) to implement a pilot study in which people with EOD are provided this psychosocial program and; (3) to develop a manual for professional caregivers (i.e. nurses) on how to implement this program in their own setting.

Methods

The program was developed based upon literature review and in co-creation with care providers for EOD and consisted out of 6 weekly sessions which were provided in day care centers for EOD in Flanders. During each session, participants received a training regarding coping mechanisms for experienced stress, anxiety and sleep problems. All participants were measured by means of actigraphy and plethysmography for primary outcomes (i.e. sleep and stress) at baseline and at posttest. Parallel to the piloting of the program, a trainers' manual is developed and being disseminated to care providers. Finally, feedback on the program was being collected by means of a survey. The research teams consists out of 2 nurses and a bioscientist.

Results

Currently, 23 participants with EOD (of which 12 males and 11 females) with a mean age of 64 years (range between 53 and 71 years) started the program. The program was provided in four different day care centers for people with EOD in Flanders. So far, 20 participants completed the full program.

Discussion

Considering the current sample size, additional efforts are needed to increase the sample size. Given the more vulnerable character of the population group, collaboration with day care centers for people with EOD are ideal partners to recruit patients for this study. Additionally, local and regional partners will now be contacted for further implementation of the program.

Implications and future perspectives

Based upon the collected feedback from care providers, not all nurses and occupational therapists that work in day care centers feel competent to guide the program themselves. The care providers state that the trainers' manual provides a guideline, but intervision between care providers and knowledge exchange overall partners remains a necessity in order for the program to be implemented in the long run.

References

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