Symptomatology of Alzheimers Dementia in A Cross Cultural Setting

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Introduction: The recognition of early symptoms of Alzheimers dementia, such as short-term memory loss, psychiatric symptoms and personality changes are influenced by demographic, socioeconomic and cultural factors. These early symptoms are not considered a medical condition and carers often do not seek any medical or psychosocial intervention.

Objective: This cross-cultural study compares the possible differences in the symptoms of Alzheimer’s dementia in people from Manchester, UK and Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Aims: To establish the differences in the symptoms of Alzheimers Dementia in Pakistanis and Caucasians in the domains of cognition, affect, personality and activities of daily living.

Methods: Two groups of people with Alzheimers Dementia were recruited at Manchester and Rawalpindi. The participants and their carers were interviewed. The instrument used included the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia (CSDD), The Brooks and McKinlay Personality Inventory and Informant Questionnaire on Cognitive Decline in the Elderly (IQ CODE).

Results: As compared to people from Manchester the Pakistanis had lower literacy levels but had similar cognitive deficits when MMSE scores were adjusted for education. They were however more depressed, had a different profile of personality change and their reported changes in activities of daily living were more severe.

Conclusion: The study showed a number of possible cultural differences in affective symptoms, personality changes and every day activities. It highlighted the need for developing mental health services for older people in Pakistan and making UK services more accessible for this growing community.

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