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Short Communication

Dementia: An Interdisciplinary Challenge of the Present and Future

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Abstract

Dementia is one of the key health and social challenges of the 21st century. Due to demographic change, the prevalence is increasing significantly worldwide. According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), over 55 million people are currently living with dementia, and this figure is expected to rise to 139 million by 2050. The disease not only challenges the medical and care system, but also has far-reaching socio-economic and ethical implications.

Introduction

Caring for people with dementia is one of the greatest challenges of our time. With the world's population growing older, this issue is increasingly becoming the focus of social, scientific and political discussions. According to estimates, the number of people with dementia worldwide will increase dramatically by 2050, posing immense challenges not only for healthcare systems but also for social structures.

Dementia is much more than a medical diagnosis - it affects the lives of those affected, their families and society in a way that requires new approaches. Traditional care concepts are reaching their limits here. Dealing with dementia requires innovative, holistic and ethically sound models that meet the complex needs of those affected while preserving their dignity, identity and autonomy.

In this context, models such as the LIPAJ dementia model and the MAKI model are becoming increasingly important. They offer forward-looking approaches that are not only scientifically sound but can also be implemented in practice. Both models aim to consider the person in their entirety, to strengthen them in their environment and to offer individual solutions for care and support.

This publication highlights the foundations and principles of these models and shows how they can be applied in practice to sustainably improve the quality of life of people with dementia. At the same time, it underscores the need for interdisciplinary cooperation, social change and targeted investments in research and innovation in order to meet the challenges of the future.

This paper offers insights into the possibilities that can arise from a human-centered and innovative approach to dementia care. It is a call to recognize the care of people with dementia not only as a medical task, but also as a social responsibility, and to seize the opportunities offered by a holistic perspective.

Definition and etiology of dementia

Dementia is a clinical syndrome characterized by the progressive loss of cognitive, emotional and social abilities. It is not a disease in its own right, but an umbrella term for various neurodegenerative and vascular diseases that lead to damage to the brain.

The most common forms of dementia are

Alzheimer's dementia (pprox.. 60-70% of all cases): Caused by beta-amyloid plaques and tau protein deposits in the brain.

- **Vascular dementia:** Consequence of cerebrovascular events or chronic circulatory disorders.
- **Lewy body dementia:** Characterized by protein deposits in nerve cells that cause cognitive and motor symptoms.
- **Frontotemporal dementia (FTD):** The frontal and temporal lobes are mainly affected, which leads to behavioral changes and speech disorders.

The pathogenesis varies depending on the subtype, but what all forms have in common is that they permanently impair neuronal function and cause irreversible damage.

Epidemiological and social implications

Increasing life expectancy is a key driver of dementia prevalence. The risk of developing dementia doubles with every additional decade of life after the age of 65. This has a significant impact on:

- **care infrastructure:** The demand for specialized care facilities and home care is increasing exponentially.
- **National economy:** Dementia causes annual costs of more than 1.3 trillion US dollars worldwide (as of 2022), particularly through care costs and loss of productivity.
- **Social structures:** Family members often bear the main burden of care, which results in psychosocial and financial burdens.
- **Holistic approaches to care:** Caring for people with dementia requires interdisciplinary and personalized approaches. Models such as the LIPAJ dementia model or the MAKI model offer innovative strategies to meet the complex requirements



Person-centered care

Preserving autonomy and dignity is at the heart of modern care approaches. Personalized therapies and individually tailored care plans not only improve the quality of life, but also the emotional stability of those affected.

Activating environment

An environment that stimulates cognitive and sensory abilities can have a positive influence on the course of the disease. Music and art therapies as well as reminiscence-based approaches promote identity and well-being.

Integration of relatives

Relatives are not only caregivers, but also key players in care. Their involvement in decision-making processes and support from professional networks is essential.

Ethical and legal framework

Decision-making in progressive dementia requires a balance between protecting those affected and safeguarding their rights. Models such as the DARDOR model (dignity, autonomy, respect, love, activation, growth) offer pioneering approaches here.

Research and innovation

Despite extensive research, dementia remains incurable. Future research approaches will focus on:

- Early diagnosis using biomarkers and imaging techniques.
- Drug therapies to delay the progression of the disease.
- Non-pharmacological interventions that promote quality of life and social participation.

Conclusion and outlook

Dementia is much more than a medical diagnosis; it is a touchstone for social justice and ethical responsibility. A holistic approach that integrates medical, care, ethical and social aspects is crucial to meeting the growing challenges.

Through interdisciplinary approaches, innovative models and the promotion of social awareness, we can shape a future in which people with dementia can age with dignity and lead a fulfilling life.

Summary

Dementia is one of the greatest health and social challenges of the 21st century. The number of people affected is continuously increasing due to demographic change. Innovative approaches such as the LIPAJ and MAKI models offer holistic solutions that put people with dementia at the center. This paper highlights the epidemiological implications, innovative care models, and the social change needed to ensure humane care.

The Importance of Holistic care for People with Dementia

The care and support of people with dementia is an interdisciplinary task that requires not only medical expertise, but also empathy, creativity and social commitment. People with dementia are not anonymous "patients", but individuals with a unique life story whose dignity and autonomy must be preserved even in the advanced stages of the disease. Holistic approaches such as the LIPAJ dementia model or the MAKI model address precisely this issue and define new standards of care.

Preserve dignity and individuality

As the disease progresses, people with dementia often lose the ability to express themselves clearly or orient themselves independently. However, their identity and personal life story remain important. Care approaches such as the LIPAJ and MAKI models place particular emphasis on focusing on the individual needs, preferences and values of those affected. This means

Personalized care plans: Measures tailored to the life biography that promote memories and preserve familiar rituals.

Respect for personality: Care is based on the understanding that every person, regardless of the stage of their illness, has value and dignity.

Activating care: Activating care plays a central role in holistic care. It creates an environment that offers security and stimulation at the same time. Studies show that sensory and cognitive stimuli not only increase well-being, but can also help to slow down the progression of the disease.

Music and art therapy: Music has a profound effect on emotions and memories. Creative design can also help people with dementia to express themselves and have positive experiences.

Promotion of physical activity: Regular exercise, adapted to the abilities of those affected, improves physical health and reduces anxiety.

Milieu therapy: A designed environment that is reminiscent of previous living spaces creates orientation and a sense of security.

Involvement of relatives

Relatives are often the first and most important caregivers for people with dementia. They have in-depth knowledge of the person's life story and needs. Holistic care actively integrates relatives:

Resource-oriented inclusion: Relatives can play a key role in biographical work, the organization of everyday life and decision-making processes.

Support for relatives: training, advice and respite services such as day care or short-term care help to avoid excessive demands and burnout.

Interdisciplinary cooperation

The complexity of dementia requires close cooperation between different professional groups. Doctors, therapists, nursing staff and activation experts must combine their skills to ensure comprehensive care.

Regular case discussions: The exchange between all those involved ensures that the care goals are continuously reviewed and adjusted.

Coordinated care: From diagnosis to palliative care, a seamless transition between the care phases should be ensured.

Scientific evidence: Care approaches and forms of therapy should be based on the latest scientific findings.

Conclusion

Holistic care for people with dementia goes beyond purely medical care. It requires a deep understanding of the individual needs of those affected and their relatives as well as close interdisciplinary cooperation. Models such as the LIPAJ dementia model The LIPAJ Dementia Model. European Journal of Health Sciences, 3(2): 45-62 and the MAKI model <https://www.corpuspublishers.com/assets/articles/shcoaj-v1-24-1001.pdf> show that the dignity, autonomy and quality of life of people with dementia can be preserved even in difficult stages of the disease. Through activating, person-centered and ethically sound care, we can come closer to the goal of dignified and holistic care.

Social Responsibility in Dealing with Dementia

The rising number of dementia cases poses challenges not only for the healthcare system, but also for society as a whole. According to estimates, the number of people with dementia worldwide could more than double by 2050. This development makes it clear that dementia can no longer be regarded as an individual fate. Instead, social change is needed that focuses on raising awareness, educating people and promoting innovative approaches to care.

Removal of taboos and education: Dementia is still associated with stigma in many societies. Those affected and their families suffer not only from the disease itself, but often also from social isolation. Broad-based awareness campaigns are needed to change this:



Raising public awareness: Information campaigns in schools, communities and social media can help to break down prejudices and promote understanding of the needs of people with dementia.

Training of specialist staff: Nursing staff, doctors and therapists need regular further training in order to be prepared for the complex requirements of dementia.

Involvement of society: Neighborhood initiatives and volunteer projects can create support networks that benefit those affected and their families.

Expansion of childcare services

A key aspect of social responsibility is to adapt the care and support infrastructure to the growing number of dementia cases. This requires:

Specialized facilities: The expansion of dementia wards and day care facilities is crucial in order to meet individual needs.

Low-threshold offers: Mobile care services, advice hotlines and online platforms can facilitate access to support, especially in rural areas.

Relief services for relatives: Short-term care and flexible care models offer family caregivers much-needed support and breaks.

Investment in research and innovation

The development of new care approaches and therapeutic interventions is essential in order to meet the challenge of dementia in the long term. Models such as the DARDOR model show that innovative approaches not only improve the quality of life of those affected, but can also promote social values such as dignity, respect and growth.

Main research areas: From the development of preventive measures to research into biomarkers for early diagnosis, research funds must be used in a targeted manner.

Technological innovations: Digital tools and smart technologies can optimize care, for example through GPS trackers to ensure safety or digital reminder assistants.

Interdisciplinary cooperation: Science, care and industry should work closely together to develop holistic solutions.

Social change as the key

Dealing with dementia is a touchstone for social cohesion and the ethical responsibility of a society. An inclusive approach that does not exclude people with dementia but integrates them into the community is essential. This includes:

Barrier-free cities:

Public spaces and facilities should be designed in such a way that they are also easily accessible for people with cognitive impairments.

Promoting participation:

Projects that actively involve those affected in cultural, social or creative activities help to improve their quality of life.

Political framework conditions: Legislators are called upon to make care professions more attractive and to provide financial resources for the expansion of dementia care.

Conclusion

Social responsibility in dealing with dementia requires a rethink in many areas. Comprehensive measures are needed, from removing the taboo surrounding the disease to expanding the care infrastructure and promoting innovative approaches such as the DARDOR model. Only through cooperation between politics, science, care and civil society can a future be shaped in which people with dementia can live in dignity and security.

A Look into the Future: Dementia as a Challenge and Opportunity for a more Humane Society

Dementia is far more than a medical diagnosis - it is a social touchstone that puts our understanding of humanity, solidarity and social responsibility to the test. How we as a community treat the most vulnerable not only shows our values, but also our willingness to act ethically and sustainably. A holistic, ethical and innovative approach to dementia care can be the key to shaping a future in which dignity and security are not the exception, but the rule.

The vision of a human future

A future that does justice to people with dementia requires a fundamental reorientation of our social structures. The focus here is on:

Dignity as a cornerstone

Every care strategy must be based on the dignity of the individual. This means respecting individual life stories and preserving the autonomy of those affected as far as possible.

Interdisciplinary approaches

Medicine, care, technology and ethics must work hand in hand. The use of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence to detect early stages or digital assistance systems can improve care, but must never replace human contact.

Social inclusion

People with dementia should not be isolated, but actively integrated into the community. From inclusive urban planning to cultural activities tailored to their needs, there are numerous ways to promote participation.

Today's responsibility for tomorrow

The challenges of dementia affect not only those affected and their families, but society as a whole. In order to ensure future-oriented and sustainable care, it is necessary:

Political determination

Legislators must create framework conditions that secure the financing and expansion of the care infrastructure. Attractive working conditions for care workers and the promotion of innovative care models such as the LIPAJ or DARDOR model are essential.

Education and awareness-raising

Social acceptance and understanding of dementia must be strengthened through information and education programs. Dealing with age-related illnesses could already become part of the curriculum in schools.

Research and innovation

Investment in research into preventive and therapeutic measures remains essential. At the same time, new models must be developed that not only manage the disease, but also actively improve the quality of life of those affected.

Dementia as an opportunity for reflection

Dementia forces us to reflect on the foundations of our society. It challenges us to look at the essence of what it means to be human and to find answers to fundamental questions: What does dignity mean in a world of loss? How can we shape care in such a way that it is not just a burden, but also an enrichment?

Conclusion: A company with vision

The future is in our hands. A more humane society that treats people with dementia with dignity and respect is not a utopia, but a responsibility. Dealing with dementia is more than a test for our care infrastructure - it is a touchstone for our values as a community. Now is the time to take responsibility and shape a world that thinks not only about the needs of tomorrow, but above all about the people of today.



A Final Word: Hope and Action

Dementia is a challenge that pushes us to the limits of our systems, our empathy and sometimes even our strength. But it is also an opportunity - an opportunity to redefine compassion, to take innovative paths and to grow as a society.

Every step we take today, whether through raising awareness, investing or simply through human closeness, has the potential to change lives. People with dementia may be limited in their abilities, but they remind us of something essential: the need for closeness, understanding and dignity unites us all.

The future is not predetermined. It lies in our decisions, our visions and our courage to look beyond the present. Let dementia not only challenge us, but also inspire us to bring out the best in our humanity. Because a better world for the most vulnerable is a better world for us all.

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