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Original Research Paper

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A STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE REGARDING WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS IN A SELECTED COMMUNITY AREA AT CHENGALPATTU DISTRICT

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KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive, irreversible, and degenerative neurological disorder that severely impacts cognitive functioning. The condition is characterized by insidious onset, leading to gradual loss of memory, reasoning abilities, and behavioral capacities. This disease not only affects individuals but also places an immense emotional, physical, and financial burden on caregivers and family members. Understanding the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease is essential for family members, as early detection can improve care outcomes and delay progression through timely medical intervention.This study was conducted to assess the knowledge of family members regarding the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease.

Background And Significance

Globally, Alzheimer's disease is one of the leading causes of dementia among older adults. According to reports from the World Health Organization (WHO), the number of people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is projected to double every 20 years, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where awareness levels remain low. Family members often play a vital role as caregivers, yet their knowledge of the disease's early signs is frequently inadequate. This knowledge gap can delay diagnosis and exacerbate challenges associated with care giving. Early identification of warning signs, such as memory loss, disorientation, and changes in behavior, can facilitate timely intervention and improve the quality of life for both patients and caregivers.

Objectives

1. To assess the knowledge of family members regarding the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to explore the knowledge levels among family members regarding Alzheimer's disease. A total of 30 participants were recruited using a convenient sampling technique. The inclusion criteria required participants to be family members of individuals at risk for or diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and residents of a selected community in the Chengalpattu District.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection was conducted using two primary tools:

1. **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule:** This was utilized to gather demographic information, including age, gender, education, religion, family income , and religion.
2. **Structured Questionnaire:** This consisted of a set of questions aimed at assessing participants' knowledge of the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. The questions focused on common symptoms, risk factors, and strategies for early intervention.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The knowledge levels were categorized into three groups:

Inadequate Knowledge: Scores indicating a lack of awareness about the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease.

Moderate Knowledge: Scores reflecting a fair understanding of the condition.

Adequate Knowledge: Scores demonstrating comprehensive awareness of Alzheimer's disease and its warning signs.

RESULTS

The study findings revealed significant insights into the knowledge levels of family members regarding Alzheimer's disease: Out of the 30 participants, 21 individuals (70%) had moderate knowledge about the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. These individuals demonstrated awareness of common symptoms such as memory loss, confusion, and difficulty completing familiar tasks but lacked a deeper understanding of the disease's progression and management. The remaining 9 participants (30%) exhibited inadequate knowledge. This group struggled to identify even the basic symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, highlighting the urgent need for awareness programs in the community. None of the participants scored high enough to be categorized as having adequate knowledge of the warning signs.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study align with findings from previous research, which indicate that awareness of Alzheimer's disease remains limited in many communities, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. The lack of adequate knowledge among family members underscores the need for targeted interventions to bridge this gap.Educational programs focusing on the early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease can empower family members to seek medical advice promptly. Workshops, community health campaigns, and the dissemination of informational materials in local languages could play a pivotal role in enhancing awareness. Additionally, healthcare providers should prioritize educating caregivers during routine consultations.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical need to improve family members' knowledge of the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. With 70% of participants demonstrating moderate knowledge and 30% showing inadequate understanding, it is evident that awareness levels remain suboptimal. The significant association between knowledge and demographic factors, such as income and religion, further emphasizes the need for tailored educational initiatives. By enhancing community awareness and equipping family members with the knowledge required to identify early symptoms, healthcare systems can facilitate timely diagnosis and

intervention. This, in turn, can improve the quality of life for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and reduce the burden on caregivers.

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