

202 - PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA AS STRATEGIES TO MANAGE BEHAVIOURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

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Symposium Overview

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Due to the lack of efficacy of psychopharmacological treatments, there has been a growing interest on the use of psychosocial interventions for people with dementia in the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD). However, stakeholders face a dilemma about which interventions should be adopted, because of the inconsistency between different study results and trustworthiness of evidence. This symposium will provide a comprehensive summary of the best evidence on this field, with empirical contextualization of the importance of psychosocial interventions according to the unmet needs model and a particular focus on the use of Arts and Music-based Interventions as strategies for dementia care.

Presentation 1

Title: The treatment of Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia: where do we stand?

Sujoy Mukherjee (Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, United Kingdom)

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Abstract: Behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) encompass a heterogeneous group of clinical manifestations that happens to a varying degree to almost all patients suffering from dementia at some stage of their illness. They may cause significant distress to carers and increases the likelihood of institutional care. The aetiologies of BPSD are multifactorial and often not clearly understood. Management of BPSD is challenging for clinicians. Pharmacological intervention, though commonly practiced, is fraught with lack of evidence, safety and efficacy. Hence, non- pharmacological

therapies are considered as first line treatment. In this presentation I shall discuss common pharmacological approaches and their pitfalls, a brief overview of common non-pharmacological approaches and emerging options of interventional psychiatry and technological solutions.

Presentation 2

Title: Assessing unmet needs in nursing homes: a promising way to prevent neuropsychiatric symptoms
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Lia Fernandes (Department of Clinical Neurosciences and Mental Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Portugal)

Abstract: Owing to the increase in dementia prevalence in the up-coming years, best-practice models will be needed. Dementia is a clinical syndrome characterized by cognitive, functional and neuropsychiatric symptoms (NPS). The latter have severe effects on both patients and caregivers, and their presence is often associated with high rates of premature nursing home placement. As a result, in nursing homes NPS are expected to be pervasive, representing a significant management challenge and often resulting in high use of psychotropic drugs and other restrictive care approaches. At the basis of NPS are fundamental brain changes and neurodegeneration, but also identifiable and modifiable factors including over- and under-stimulating environments, undetected medical illnesses, untreated pain, drug interactions and under-recognized unmet needs. The accurate identification of NPS predisposing factors, may improve their management by enabling interventions directed to well-defined targets. Following this rationale, this presentation will provide an overview of the results of a cross-sectional study conducted with nursing home residents aiming to identify NPS risk factors. These results suggest that individualized interventions following the assessment of unmet needs and the optimization of prescribed psychotropic drugs are promising alternatives to the overuse of pharmacological approaches in nursing homes.

Presentation 3

Title: The Arts as a medium for improving social inclusion in dementia
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Abstract: In a multidisciplinary framework, but with a focus on artistic practices, this presentation aims to describe the dialogic capacity of the gesturality of patients with Alzheimer's disease, in response to sound stimulation, in order to create therapeutic performance strategies for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. In this presentation we report a pilot study in which we investigated how psychomotor activities and sound stimulation could favor social relationships, expression and communication.

The psychopedagogical actions applied are based on three basic pillars: *improvisation* as a technical procedure, *playfulness* as a pedagogical practice and *gesture-sound duality* as a means of communication and expression. This Action Model was already used with non-verbal Autism Spectrum Disorder, having obtained good results. The activities developed, with psychomotor (dance), musical (sound stimulation) and expressive content (orality, writing, drawing, painting and collage), revealed that artistic practices are capable to promote joy and well-being, improving self-esteem and decision-making in the face of challenges; to awaken forgotten memories; to develop creativity; and to stimulate

logical thinking. Based on previous results, we are implementing the same model, developing action strategies for the non-pharmacological treatment of patients with Alzheimer's Disease. This Therapeutic Action Model, with a focus on artistic practices, will promote the social inclusion of dementia patients.

Presentation 4

Title: Music-based interventions in the acute setting for patients with dementia

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Lia Fernandes (Department of Clinical Neurosciences and Mental Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Portugal)

Abstract: The exponential rise in dementia prevalence makes it imperative to rethink dementia care. Acute hospital admissions of patients with dementia (PwD) are especially critical episodes, with Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) arising frequently. Therefore, acute dementia care is a priority area. The use of non-pharmacological interventions to promote well-being and manage BPSD is increasingly recommended in any clinical setting. Among these approaches, Music-based intervention (Mbi) seems an especially promising option, according to recent studies, conducted in long term care setting. In this presentation, we will highlight the results of a pioneer systematic review synthesizing available evidence on the use of music based-interventions, in the acute setting, with PwD. Identified studies suggest it is feasible to deliver Mbi in the acute setting to PwD. While there is some evidence for positive effects, at least in the short term, there is still a lack of robust, adequately powered and controlled studies.