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The relationship between agitation in older adults with Dementia and their core network

Older persons with dementia who live in homes with extended families may receive support and care from a few or many people. The term “core network” has been used to describe a social support structure that is more intimate and consists of immediate caregivers who are part of a larger social network. Determining the effectiveness of smaller core network size and increased frequency of contact with the core network in reducing agitation among older adults with dementia would help health professionals and caregivers better identify and treat patients’ needs. While multiple psychotropic drugs have been used to suppress agitated behavior in older adults, these drugs have serious side-effect profiles. Multiple nondrug therapies have been tested to treat agitation, but their efficacy has been limited. Among older adult patients with dementia (PWDs), the size and frequency of their contact with their core network (the more intimate part of their social network) may affect the identification and treatment of their unmet needs and the amount of stress they experience. Several geriatric theories suggest that older adults may prefer a smaller core network with a higher frequency of contact, which may stress the person less and be a better way of identifying and treating the person’s unmet needs. It is critically important to understand the relationships between the size of core network and frequency of contact, as doing so may help to identify and treat the person’s unmet needs by studying the effectiveness of smaller core networks with higher frequency of contact in reducing levels of agitation in PWDs. The purpose of this paper is to describe the salience of caregiver network to outcomes and agitation for older adults with dementia.

Biography

Amal A-Ghassani, is serving as the department head of Community and Mental health at the Oman College of Health Sciences-Nursing Program. She received her undergraduate degree and master’s from Villanova University in Philadelphia, PA and her doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in December 2017, and completed a Graduate Certificate in Applied Gerontology in June 2016 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The focus of Dr. Amal’s research is the older adults with dementia and agitation. Dr. Amal’s other research interest include older adults, dementia, community, issues related to gerontology, and nursing education.

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