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COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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Comprehensive cognitive assessments are essential for accurate diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Patients, with their family caregivers, are given an opportunity to see inside the disease process; to understand Alzheimer's disease is to understand the course of their life. Globally, the number of people living with dementia affects 50 million and 5.7 million in the US. AD is neurodegenerative, terminal illness and a disease. Cognitive assessments are the key element for *proper* diagnosis, proper planning, care and prognosis of AD. Because an assessment requires input from a person(s) who knows the patient well, family caregivers provide insights and evidence of how AD is affecting the patient while each patient's expression is unique, AD has a predictable progression/digression. By determining where patients are in the disease continuum, four key points of decision can be tracked: diagnosis and primary medical care, eligibility and referral for Alzheimer's clinical trials, safety/risk for preventable emergency medical treatment, and status of dependence with corresponding level of care. In a 4-year grant-funded outpatient clinic, 550 patients were referred by their primary care provider or neurologist for a memory screening; average age was 72. Tools used for patients are mini-mental status examination (MMSE-2: EV) and Montreal cognitive assessment (MoCA v7.0) and tools used for family caregivers are quick dementia rating system (QDRS) and patient symptom checklist (based on the global deterioration scale). The assessment was the key element used to clarify/verify an AD diagnosis and treatment plan for patient and family caregivers.

Biography

Susan Crowson is a Certified Dementia Practitioner with over 12 years' of experience in developing systematic approaches to recognize and identify loss and behaviours due to dementia. She is the Dementia Specialist for the Neurology Clinic in Memphis TN providing comprehensive cognitive assessments and a Certified Testing Administrator for Alzheimer's clinical trials. She was Manager of Baptist Memorial Healthcare Corporation Memory Care Center, an outpatient memory screening clinic, and Director of Programs and Advocacy at the Alzheimer's Association Mid-South Chapter. She provided testimony for the National Alzheimer's Plan Advisory Council in Washington, DC. She is Guest Speaker for conferences and teaches about Dementia to clinical staff and families. In addition to her professional experience, she was primary Caregiver for her father who died with Alzheimer's disease in 2010.

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