

The Knowledge and Attitudes of Primary Care and the Barriers to Early Detection and Diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

Donna de Levante Raphael

Alzheimer's Foundation of America, NY 10001, USA

Primary care physicians play a vital role in the clinical care of their patients, early identification of dementia, and disease advocacy. It is essential to assess the knowledge and attitudes of physicians in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. In primary care, the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is often missed or delayed. With the increased prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and the growing impact of dementia on health care resources, early detection by primary care physicians (PCP) is essential. Thus, their knowledge and attitudes about early detection and diagnosis are crucial. To examine the knowledge and attitudes of primary care physicians regarding early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and how barriers may contribute to missed and delayed detection and diagnosis. An interpretive scope review was used to synthesize and analyze a body of literature published over the past decade. The study population are physicians in the United States. The current health systems experience challenges in providing early, safe, accurate, and comprehensive Alzheimer's diagnosis and care by a primary care physician trained or knowledgeable in diagnosing the various forms of dementia. This article identifies several interrelated obstacles to early detection and diagnosis in primary dementia care, including gaps in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and resources for person with dementia (PWD)/caregivers and their primary care providers and systematic and structural barriers that negatively impact dementia care. Research shows that Alzheimer's disease has gone underdiagnosed and undertreated. Delays in detection, diagnosis, and resource utilization may have social and clinical implications for individuals affected by Alzheimer's disease and their families, including challenges in obtaining an accurate diagnosis. Until the issues of missed and delayed Alzheimer's screening become more compelling, efforts to promote early detection and diagnosis should focus on the education of physicians and removing the barriers to diagnosis.

Keywords: Alzheimer's disease; primary care physicians; dementia; knowledge and attitude; early diagnosis and management; barriers to diagnosis.

Biography

Donna de Levante Raphael is a Gerontologist and has earned her PhD in Gerontology and Public Health from Walden University. She is the Director of the National Memory Screening Program, at one of the leading Alzheimer's disease Non-profit organizations. Donna also provides leadership and strategic solutions to the AFA's Medical & Scientific Board. Her research interests focus on social gerontology to include topics on the quality of life and healthy aging issues of America's diverse older adult populations and Alzheimer's disease. Donna has over 13 years of experience recognizing the need for Alzheimer's disease and dementia education for professional staff in healthcare and corporate organizations and America's diverse communities. Donna strives to provoke thought, start a conversation, educate, empower, and be a resource for aging in general and diverse communities.