
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

How to live with Alzheimer disease - quality of life is equally important for the family members and for the patient

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The social status of people with dementia is a topic of numerous theological, philosophical, sociological, economic and legal points of view.

Oldness, which is a natural physiological process, is characterized by physical and psychological changes which come under illness. One of them, striking mainly elderly people, is dementia caused by neurodegenerative brain disease. Its course is chronic and progressive. Dementia is characterized by memory loss, changes in conduct and personality, getting lost in familiar places, being unable to deal autonomously with everyday activities as well as personal security, hygiene and nutrition neglect. The most common among dementias is Alzheimer's (AD) which symptoms reveal slowly and aggravate to the point of forgetfulness, serious thinking and judgement disorders, and finally to the point of total incapacity for autonomous functioning. AD lasts from 2 to 10 and more years. At the beginning it is controllable by medications but, as disease advances, patient needs 24 hour care and very often one family member has to devote himself/herself to constant care of the patient. AD dictates both patient's and family member's lives.

It usurps brains and memories from the ill but emotions, wishes and basic peculiarities pictured through warmth, looks, but also feeling of lost, anxiety and fear remain. On the other side, guardians state that they lost joy for life and feel helpless.

This illness requires routine, patience in behaviour, adjusting living conditions to the new situation and many renunciations. Although patients with AD need the help of healthcare institutions, the role of guardians is crucial in this disease. Therefore, care for AD patients implies the care of family members who care for him. This often involves taking medical care of the guardian, helping to resolve legal issues, jointly plan the progress of the illness, and how to treat the patient. However, the role of society to create better conditions for the care of the diseased will have multiple contributions to the fight against disease, since the issue of health and disease, and thus of quality of life, plays a large role for the individual, family and the entire community