POSTER ABSTRACT

Friendly Basque Country: Actions for promote dementia friendly communities

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Euskadi Lagunkoia or AF Basque Country project is an initiative which is being carried out from the Department of Employment and Social Policies of the Basque Country and Matia Institute since 2012. It is based on the "Age friendly cities and communities" program, promoted by the WHO. This initiative enables older people to live in "age-friendly" villages and cities, by removing physical obstacles and barriers as well as by tapping their potential as protagonists and leaders of the project. So far, 50 municipalities in this region joined Euskadi Lagunkoia to improve the quality of life of their citizens.

Recently, different institutions have included the concept dementia in the friendly paradigm, transferring the age-friendly theory to dementia issue. In doing this, it becomes a key strategy to facilitate the inclusion of people with dementia in society. A dementia-friendly community can be defined as "one in which people with dementia are empowered to have high aspirations and feel confident, knowing they can contribute and participate in activities that are meaningful to them" (Alzheimer’s Society, 2013). Thus, it enables people living with dementia to actively participate in community activities by facilitating them to remain connected to people important for them. Additionally, it helps people to stay healthy and active at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

This dementia friendly approach was included in Euskadi Lagunkoia in 2015 in order to promote dementia friendly communities. A qualitative methodology was selected, including both focus groups and in-depth interviews. A total number of six focus groups were conducted: four with the owners of establishments, where 78 people participated, 1 group composed by people living with dementia and another one composed by people with dementia’s relatives. Additionally, three in-depth interviews were conducted with experts in dementia, one geriatrician and two psychologists.

Finally, as a result of this study, two action programmes were developed: the Age-Friendly Business program, including a module about dementia, and the Dementia Friendly Community Guide. The first program provides educational and self-assessment materials to participating businesses to make the environment and services friendlier with older people. Information about how businesses can provide quality services for older adults affected by loss of mobility, vision and hearing impairments and dementia was included. Regarding dementia, the program is specially
focused on helping those business owners and managers to detect, address and promote the autonomy of those clients with mild cognitive impairment. On the other hand, the Dementia Friendly Guide aims at citizen awareness and provides guidelines about how to help people with dementia in their daily life. It was launched with the collaboration of the Alzheimer Associations of the Basque Country on the World Alzheimer’s Day 2015.

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