

ELDERLY WOMEN WITH DEMENTIA

By Name

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## Elderly Women with Dementia

Elderly women with dementia represent a significant population that presents unique needs. Dementia is one of the highly debilitating conditions that reduce an individual's quality of life through the deterioration of brain cells, a factor associated with abnormal degeneration (Sanders and Swails, 2011). Individuals with this condition present a diverse range of symptoms such as memory loss, personality changes, difficulties in daily living activities, challenges in expressing emotions, limited capacity of judgment, lower abilities of decision-making, as well as speech and language difficulties. The aging process increases the risk of developing dementia, which is more prevalent among the elderly group. Elderly females present a higher risk of developing dementia compared to their male counterparts. Dementia alters individual functionality and introduces the need for assisted living and adequate support that can promote a higher quality of life for the patient (Bordier *et al.*, 2014). Elderly women with dementia need help from social workers, whose main responsibility is to ensure that debilitated individuals have access to social care services and constant assistance with daily living activities.

Social workers play a critical role in addressing the needs of specific populations. Social workers have the capacity to adjust their approach of care delivery based on the evidence-based interventions for different client groups (Jackson *et al.*, 2017). As a result, social workers provide a diverse range of services to older patients with dementia. Patients with dementia need adequate support so that they may register positive outcomes in daily living while experiencing a higher quality of life (Lundberg, 2018). The multiple adverse effects and complications of dementia such as frequent forgetting, inability to trace directions, speech challenges, relationship constraints, poor judgment, limited abstract thinking skills, extreme personalities such as irritability, unfavourable mood changes, and the limited desire to live explain why patients with

this condition need constant support from social workers (Lundberg, 2018). Social workers delivering care to patients with dementia must seek to understand the needs of the specific individual before developing a care plan. The needs of the elderly women determine the selected interventions for older women with dementia.

Elderly women with dementia represent a service user group with a protected characteristic due to their increased vulnerability. The symptoms of dementia compromise the individual's quality of life while reducing an individual's level of autonomy (Kolanowski *et al.*, 2018). Patients with dementia are unable to make decisions regarding their wellbeing or carry out activities that support their living. These challenges explain why social workers dealing with older clients with dementia must play a critical role in the provision of the necessary care. The complex needs of the elderly women with dementia compel social workers to focus on establishing an intervention plan that meets the various needs (Sanders and Swails, 2011; Lundberg, 2018). When dealing with older women with dementia, it is important to maintain high levels of respect and dignity to the client or service user irrespective of the levels of debilitation. Even when the service users are unable to make decisions, or carry out critical judgment, it is imperative to promote their interests through the delivery of quality services. The prioritisation of care delivery for each elderly woman with dementia is dependent on individual needs (Jackson *et al.*, 2017). Social workers experience unique challenges when dealing with elderly women with dementia.

The condition makes it impossible for the women to participate in shared decision-making processes regarding their wellbeing. Symptoms such as limited judgment and poor decision-making explain why it is difficult to deal with such service users (Kolanowski *et al.*, 2018). Each of these challenges calls for the development of an effective strategy that helps in

fostering positive outcomes. Social workers need to understand the nature of dementia, its leading symptoms, diagnostic procedures, as well as the prognosis of the disorder (Sanders and Swails, 2011). Understanding these concepts provides a platform for enhancing equality and diversity. In this context, enhancing equality ensures that the delivery of social care services does not foster the discrimination and marginalisation of elderly women with dementia. Existing research evidence reveals the high rates of marginalisation among elderly women with dementia (Lundberg, 2018). The high level of marginalisation explains why many of these women lack adequate support for daily living and assistance in other aspects of their lives.

Social workers must understand the unique needs of elderly women with dementia and focus on identifying how dementia reduces the quality of life and results in supported living. Based on the extent of individual needs, social workers can choose the level of care for delivery depending on the abilities of the individual. Some elderly women may need daily support in all activities categorise as daily living while others may require a few visits per week. Developing individualised plans can help social workers to meet the needs of elderly women with dementia.

## References

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