Life Quality and the Self:

A Person- Centered Case Study of Alzheimer's Disease

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Abstract

Alzheimer's is a neurodegenerative disorder that manifests itself physically, cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally. Despite that AD influences all aspects of life of the sufferer, treatment focuses on the biological and cognitive aspects, fact which is problematic, both theoretically (as cognitive abilities decline, it is thought that the self is gradually lost) and practically (aspects that should be targeted are neglected). The result is that AD is approached differently from other neuropsychiatric disorders and there is no focus on the individual's actual well- being.

A Person- Centered Approach recognizes and targets all aspects of the person. The model approaches the core of the self and its goal is to promote the holistic well- being of the person, leading to a life with quality despite the disorder.

The importance of the PCA is made apparent through a case study of an 84- year old man with AD. The interaction with the man began with sessions of cognitive reinforcement only, as requested by the caregivers, yet the spherical needs of the person and his low life quality lead to the PCA being applied.

The treatment plan became more personalized (attuned to the preferences and mood of the man), more engaging (allowing a sense of agency, including the person in the process and the goal) and elements that allowed the expression of the self (roles, character) were added.

After some time, a therapeutic alliance was developed and the man became more stable emotionally and cognitively, learned to manage life with his existing skills, and his subjective well- being increased, as reported by the caregivers, the man himself, and as revealed through questionnaires.

A PCA in AD allows the person to maintain a sense of self, and a quality of everyday life, because it approaches individuals as persons and not as manifestations of disorders.

Literature

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Biography

Sylva Sarafidou was born in Athens, Greece in 1992. She completed her BA with a major in Psychology and a minor in Art History in 2015. At the same time she conducted her internship for two years in a psychiatric clinic and three elderly care units. She is now completing her MSc in Neuroscience and Psychology of Mental Health at King's College London (along with the Accredited King's Membership Programme), and her training in Integrative Psychotherapy and Expressive Arts Therapies. Professionally, she is working with individuals with Alzheimer's and other neuropsychiatric disorders since 2015, with children with developmental disorders (in groups of creativity and expression) since 2016, and with the caregivers and families with support and psychoeducation. Moreover she is writing articles about psychology and mental health in online magazines and is conducting public speeches about dementia. Her main tool is a combination of all arts and a neuroscientific background.

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