Acute Confusional State, so often and so missed.

Dr Melchor Rodrigo MD, Professor of Neurology International Institute for Environmental and Medical Research

Joseph Reiss CMI, CIEC, Dir. of Environmental Sciences at Certified Site Safety, NY. International Institute for Environmental and Medical Research

Introduction:

Acute confusional state is exactly that, ACUTE. Yet it is often mistaken for dementia, even though it started all of a sudden and didn't develop over the years. Hyponatremias, hospitalization, and infections (usually urinary) are the main triggers.

Purpose:

To evaluate patients at a hospice for wrongfully diagnosed dementias.

Materials and Methods:

We evaluated 23 senior citizens aged 68 to 96 with a diagnosis of dementia. 17 of them had Alzheimer's as their diagnosis, 3 of them vascular dementia, and the other three just dementia as a diagnosis. We did not go as far as testing for PTAU 181, nor did we perform cerebral PET scans. We did however perform MRI´s without contrast in those who could have one done (no defibrillator, etc.). 11 of the 17 patients previously diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease had hyponatremia, 5 of them also had a UTI. We couldn´t really evaluate the hospitalization factor since they were not ambulatory patients. One of the patients diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and one of the vascular dementia groups actually had normal pressure hydrocephalus and recovered many of the abilities they had lost after a lumbar puncture. Their cognition improved. All treated patients experienced improvement in their cognitive functions, to different degrees.

Conclusion:

Bottom line is a careful history and examination with appropriate investigation allows underlying causes to be detected and treated.

References:

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