

Issues related to early onset dementia in Sapporo city, Japan

Nozomu Ikeda¹, Akiko Iwabuchi², Noriko Hirano³

¹*School of Health Sciences Sapporo Medical University, Sapporo, Japan,* ²*Otemon Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan,* ³*Association of early-onset dementia and the family in Hokkaido, Sapporo, Japan*

Introduction

Though still uncommon, early onset dementia (at age < 65 years) has been recognized as a major social problem in Japan. As it is considered to cause a different set of problems to those associated with senile dementia, a detailed investigation of this condition is necessary.

Objectives

In this study, we investigated the regional prevalence of early onset dementia in Sapporo city (located in northern Japan), as well as issues associated with lifestyle and patient care.

Methods

Both studies were based on questionnaires. The prevalence survey covered hospitals, nursing homes, day care services, and other dementia-related facilities (n = 1,409). The criteria of early onset dementia were set according to those employed in an earlier prevalence study.

The survey to identify issues related to lifestyle and patient care was administered to 61 patients and their caregivers (n = 122). The questionnaires consisted of a total of 19 questions for the patients and 24 questions for the caregivers, respectively.

Results and conclusion

Of 1,409 questionnaires, 677 (48%) were returned completed, and a total of 211 patients were identified from the prevalence survey. The rate of Alzheimer disease was 50.2%, that of vascular dementia was 24.6% and that of frontotemporal dementia was 8.5%. The prevalence rate for the total population of Sapporo city was estimated to be 2.4% (about 450 cases).

The results of the survey of patients and their caregivers revealed the presence of difficulties in continuing employment, a lack of service facilities for early-onset dementia sufferers, a tendency for the period of care to be protracted, and the existence of psychological and economic burdens on caregivers.

Many of these problems are thought to be specific to early onset dementia, suggesting the need for specifically tailored rehabilitation services.