Mokslinė-praktinė konferencija

SLAUGOS MOKSLO NAUJOVĖS: 2025

2025 m. gegužės 21 d.
Vilnius

Konferencija skirta visų specializacijų bendrosios praktikos slaugytojams,
išplėstinės praktikos slaugytojams, visų pakopų slaugos studijų programų
studentams, slaugos tyrėjams ir mokslininkams

Konferencijos tezės

Sudarytoja Rita URBANAVIČĖ

The experiences of home care nurses when suspecting dementia in patients

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Background. Worldwide, dementia is underdiagnosed, with around 75% of all cases going undiagnosed [1]. Dementia action plans, both globally [2] and in Lithuania [3], recommend not only increasing dementia diagnosis rates, but also detecting dementia as early as possible. The majority of people with cognitive impairment are cared for at home [4], and almost 99% of them see a primary care professional at least once a year [5]. Thus, nurses are central to dementia care, as they have the most frequent contact with patients [6] and is usually the first point of contact for patients or their relatives at the onset of early symptoms of dementia [7]. In addition, home care further enables them to observe patients in a familiar environment, which allows them to identify early cognitive impairment in the patient and to suspect a dementia-related condition [8].

The aim of the study – to assess the experiences of home care nurses in suspecting dementia in patients.

Methods. A qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach was used. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with 10 home-based nurses. Analysis was performed using qualitative content analysis.

Results. The results showed that home care nurses identify early signs of dementia-related cognitive decline, including changes in memory, orientation, thinking, and daily functioning. In response, they provide care tailored to individual patient needs and collaborate with relatives and the interdisciplinary team. However, they face challenges such as poor healthcare system coordination, stigmatizing attitudes among relatives, and limited interdisciplinary cooperation.

Conclusions. The availability and regularity of home-based services in the patient's unique environment enable nurses to recognise dementia symptoms early. Identified cognitive changes allow services to be tailored to individual needs, ensuring continued comprehensive care. However, limited education and the low accessibility of home-based services hinder nurses from contributing effectively to early dementia diagnosis.

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