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**Unmet psychosocial needs and mental health risks in the elderly: a systematic literature review**

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**Background and Objectives:** Psychosocial needs, such as emotional support, social interaction, and access to mental health care, are frequently unmet among the elderly. This might lead to an increased risk of depression, functional decline, and institutionalization. However, psychosocial aspects of care of elderly remain underprioritized in many healthcare systems. This study aimed to identify the prevalence and types of unmet psychosocial needs in elderly individuals and assess their association with mental health outcomes.

**Materials and methods:** A systematic literature review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines. A total of 1456 records were screened, and 24 full-text peer-reviewed studies were included. Articles were thematically coded by type of unmet needs (psychological, social, functional), care setting, and population characteristics.

**Results:** The majority (70.8%) of studies reported unmet mental health needs such as depression or anxiety, and 66.7% reported unmet social needs like loneliness or lack of social contact, 54.2% noted functional limitations linked to emotional distress. Several studies using standardized tools such as the Camberwell Assessment of Need for the Elderly (CANE) revealed discrepancies between self and caregiver reported needs. Research conducted across various countries, including the Netherlands, Brazil, China, and Germany, showed consistent patterns in the underrecognition of psychosocial needs regardless of healthcare setting. One study demonstrated a significantly higher risk of depressive symptoms among elderly individuals with unmet social needs compared to those without.

**Conclusions:** Unmet psychosocial needs are prevalent among elderly individuals and strongly associated with poorer mental health outcomes. Routine assessment and targeted interventions may improve emotional well-being and quality of life in this population.

**Key messages:**

- Every second paper noted functional limitations linked to emotional distress.
- Three quarters of the studies about unmet needs of the elderly were conducted in North America and Europe, while in some continents there were no such studies at all.