

Help-seeking for dementia among older adults: An application of the self-regulatory model

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Dementia & Older People

- Early detection of some forms of dementia difficult
- Alzheimer's disease (AD) most common type
- Long period (decades?) of no or mild symptoms in AD
- Treatments available that slow progression of disease

Self-Regulation Model

- Illness representation:
 - Identity
 - Cause
 - Time-line
 - Consequences
 - Curability/controllability
- Action plan or efforts to cope
- Appraisal of success of coping plans

Health & Self-regulation

- Applied to several chronic diseases
 - Diabetes
 - Arthritis
 - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
 - Multiple Sclerosis

Dementia & Older People

- Therefore, early detection is important for:
 - Explanation of symptoms
 - Planning for future
 - Possible treatment
- What factors influence seeking help for dementia?

Sample

- 205 healthy adults from Cairns region (59% return rate)
- Age 50 to 94, average 69.8 years ($SD = 10.5$), 64% female
- Recruited from community groups, residential homes, and via respondents

Measures

- Demographic information
- Knowledge of dementia
- Prior contact with a person with dementia
- Perceptions of ageing
- Attitudes toward seeking help
- Illness perception
- Help seeking intentions

Results

- Low knowledge of Alzheimer's disease
- Positive view of ageing self
- Positive attitude toward seeking help for mental health problem
- Moderate to strong intention to seek help with dementia

Results

- Prompt help-seeking intentions associated with:
 - Knowledge of dementia
 - Positive self-perceptions of ageing
 - Physical
 - Thinking
 - Social relationships
 - Positive mental health help-seeking

Results

- Measures of help-seeking of all types associated with one another
- Illness perceptions not associated with intentions to seek care
- Analysis to predict intention to seek help with dementia accounted for 15% of variance

Conclusions

- Low levels of knowledge of symptoms of dementia limit appropriate interventions
- Positive attitudes toward seeking help suggest that early diagnosis may be possible, leading to early treatment
- Multivariate analysis showed some predictability of intention to seek help

Conclusions

- Some value in application of theoretical Self-Regulation model
- Negative role of stereotypes of old age in promoting help-seeking
- Need for more information to counter stigma of seeking help for treatable conditions