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Dementia knowledge among healthcare professionals: A descriptive study

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Introduction: Dementia is a health condition results from neurodegenerative processes and occurs in later stages of life. The quality of life for people with dementia is affected by the quality of care provided by healthcare professionals. The knowledge of dementia among healthcare professionals is important to help them engage in clear decision making and providing an appropriate ongoing treatment plan about dementia. Level of knowledge on dementia in Kuwait is Limited. This research investigated the level of knowledge of health care professionals about dementia.

Methods: This descriptive study included various health care professionals (physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and pharmacists) from Seven governmental hospitals. Dementia Knowledge Assessment Scale (DKAS) was used to measure participants' knowledge. It includes four subscales: causes and characteristics, communication and behavior, care consideration, and risks and health promotion. In addition, demographic data sheet covering age, gender, education, level of experience were included. Two Questions were added to the demographic sheet: Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 and descriptive statistics was used for analyzing mean and SD. Kuskal-Wallis ANOVA test was used to compare between more than two independent groups.

Results: 1005 subjects from different professions participated in this study: 120 physicians, 657 nurses,

107 physical therapists, 31 occupational therapists, and 90 pharmacists. The final score of DKAS scale showed a low level of dementia knowledge among the healthcare professionals (18.98 / 50). There was a significant difference between all groups in DKAS final score and four subscales ($P < 0.01$). The descriptive statistics showed that OTs have better knowledge about dementia than other professions. The two additional questions showed that 89.6% of the participants did not attended course/s about dementia and 75% of the participants would like to attend a presentation or workshop about dementia.

Discussion: This study showed that there is a low level of knowledge about dementia among healthcare professionals, which is due to the low number of people who attended training courses. Occupational therapists, nurses, and physicians have more knowledge than other professions. Yet, they still do not have sufficient knowledge about dementia. The majority of the participants expressed their interest to attend a presentation or workshop about dementia. This poor knowledge among health care professionals requires immediate attention. This study added value to the Middle Eastern research of dementia. It highlights that further dementia training and education is still needed.

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