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EXCESS WINTER DEATHS AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA

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Introduction: Excess winter deaths (EWDs) have been observed in Ireland and in other European countries. Previous studies found EWDs are greatest in older persons with respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. However, a UK study found that in the elderly who have Dementia or Alzheimer's, 40% more die in winter. This Irish study looked at Alzheimer's disease and dementia related (ADRDs) deaths among those aged 65 years and over that were recorded in Ireland from 2010 to 2015.

Method: All deaths from Dementia or Alzheimer's disease were obtained by month of death from the Central Statistics Office. The World Health Organization formula for calculating excess winter deaths was then used.

Results: The study found 91 excess deaths recorded as Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRDs) among those aged 65 years and over in the winter of 2010/11 and this rose to 172 excess deaths in the winter of 2014/15. This equates to a percentage increase of 33.7% ADRDs deaths 2010/11 compared to 37.8% in 2014/15.

Conclusion: This study shows that excess Alzheimer's disease and Dementia related deaths (ADRDs) increased among those aged 65 years and over in Ireland over study period. The causes of the excess winter mortality among those with dementia still need further research as it is likely to be multi-factorial including factors such as patient with dementia unable to keep themselves warm at home due to forgetfulness or frailty. The EU ageing population will lead to increase in incidence of excess dementia death in winter and is likely to be major problem unless good public health policies are put in place. It is vital that there is more public awareness of vulnerability of those with dementia to excess winter mortality.

BIOGRAPHY

Anne O'Farrell currently works as an Epidemiologist/Biostatistician in the Health Intelligence Unit of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Ireland. Anne's obtained a BSc (Hons) Biological Science in 1997 from University College London, an MSc in Epidemiology from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in 2001 and she completed her HRB funded PhD in Epidemiology at Trinity College in 2010. She was recently made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Medicine Ireland (RAMI). She has published over 30 peer-reviewed papers and has reviewed many peer reviewed papers. She has mentored undergraduate and PhD students. She has presented her work at many national and international conferences and has also chaired and ran workshops at conferences. Her main areas of interests are epidemiology of the social determinants of health, social exclusion, care of the elderly, fuel poverty, alcohol, tobacco misuse, homelessness, health policy and health economic policy.

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