Women and Dementia - Not Forgotten

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About ILC-UK

- The International Longevity Centre-UK is the leading UK think tank on longevity and demographic change. It is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change.

- The ILC-UK is one of 14 partners in the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance. The alliance is a multinational research and educational consortium.
Dementia and Women – Not Forgotten

- Aim to approach dementia through the prism of sex and gender.
- Hitherto a comprehensive approach to gender and sex specific differences has been largely invisible.
- Aim to provide a health based framework.
- Gender lens
Women living longer...

Female advantage in life expectancy at Birth for Selected Countries in 2008 (Obtained from the US Census Bureau Database)
Yet not necessarily healthier lives…

Years Lived with Disability due to dementia per 100,000 person years (Source: Mathers & Leonardi 2000)

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Dementia, a foreboding reality for women?

- Prevalence of dementia syndromes specifically Alzheimer’s disease increasing among women.
- Incidence – relationship between age and sex not conclusive.
- Mortality rates – growing cause of death.
- Disease burden for dementia estimated to be almost twice as high for females (11,016,000) as for males (6,092,000).
‘Triple Jeopardy’ - Awareness and Diagnosis

- Paucity of evidence on awareness and diagnosis - even less on the gendered experience.
- Gender disparities in self-reported health.
- Gender stereotyping by clinicians.
Risk Factors

- Age
- Sex
- Genetics, some sex-specific genes for AD.
- Hormones – significant biological factor.
- Modifiable risk factors – physical activity, diet and lifestyle, education.
Treatment and Response

- Significant lack of research in this area.

- Gender bias in clinical research – lack of women in clinical trials.

- Behavioural and cognitive expression of dementia – men and women shown to have different behavioural and cognitive responses.
Care

- Women make up 70% of the world’s 1.3 billion poor.

- Older women more vulnerable to abuse or mistreatment.

- Bedrock of dementia care across the world unpaid carers, mainly (female) family members.

- Women suffer financial hardship, social isolation, mental and physical poor health.
Conclusions

- Women will disproportionately bear the burden of dementia in the coming years – in terms of numbers, but also impact.

- Strong sex and gender dimension in risk factors and care, need more research, awareness and diagnosis, treatment and response.

- Unless we fully understand the effect of sex and gender, our health and social care systems will not be able to respond appropriately.
Recommendations

- Dementia health policies and programmes should incorporate a gender dimension in their design, delivery and evaluation.
- Gender should be included as a key health determinant in promotion and disease prevention of dementia.
- Dementia research at the regional, national and international level needs to be disaggregated by gender and age.
- Women and men should be equally represented and involved at the micro and macro level of decision-making with regard to the development of health and social care policies and resource allocation as they pertain to dementia.
- There is a need for greater interdisciplinary research incorporating the biological and social models of health for men and women to improve health interventions and outcomes.
ILC-UK calls on:

- the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
  - to ask national governments through their reporting mechanisms to provide information on national actions and measures with regard to promoting gender equality and equal access to health and social care for women with dementia.
  - to produce a general recommendation to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of dementia on women and how dementia will affect the rights of older women to health and social protection in the coming years.
ILC-UK calls on:

- the Department of Gender, Women and Health at the World Health Organisation to commission and produce specific research, publications and awareness raising information to highlight the gender inequalities for women and dementia in line with other health conditions and problems currently highlighted.
Copies of the report available:
www.ilcuk.org.uk

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