

Justice In Healthcare Conference Medical University Of Lublin

Poster presentation summary

Title; Dementia-ism: The denial of equitable care for those living with dementia

Abstract; We argue that fundamental principles of medical ethics are denied to people living with dementia and their carers; particularly justice and beneficence.

There is widespread age discrimination within health services in the UK particularly against those living with dementia. Those affected are vulnerable and often unable to make autonomous decisions. There is a history underfunding to the degree that provision of services for those with dementia falls short of other groups. This is sustained by a political unwillingness to ensure equitable beneficence. Hence our term dementia-ism.

Dementia-ism doesn't only affect people living with dementia but it also creates injustice for their carers who with little statutory support. Long term care is available only on a means-tested basis by private companies. In turn, this compromises justice as demonstrated by minimum staffing, reliance on non-permanent agency staff and over use of anti psychotic drugs. Thus dementia-ism results in the abandonment by the state of those living with dementia.

Poor funding also compromises beneficence as it is invariably associated with a lack of investment in staff training. Even in state funded general hospitals, where 25% of beds are occupied by patients with dementia, staff receive little training in specialist dementia care. Poor training also results in symptoms being undetected and it is estimated 60% of those with dementia remain undiagnosed during the early stages of the condition, where treatment would be more successful. The lack of cure for dementia also reflects the inequity with little investment in research compared to other illnesses whose prevalence rates are lower.

To help address dementia-ism we collaborate with local health communities and users. This resulted in a dementia awareness programme that is integrated within the training of all nurses at the University of Lincoln. We focus on the recognition of symptoms to allow an early diagnosis, support of patients and carers and we have developed a simulation laboratory where students are able to experience a range of contemporary treatments.

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