

DO FAMILY PHYSICIANS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DETECTING ALZHEIMER'S?

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Background: Based on an estimated increase of the overall number of people diagnosed with Alzheimer Disease (AD) from 35mn to 116mn within the next 30 years, it becomes obvious that improving early detection of AD should become a priority.

Method: We performed a literature analysis based on Romanian medical publications and market research papers, correlated with worldwide reported results. We correlated our findings with the current public health insurance regulations (i.e. framework contract, health insurance regulations).

Results: The analysis identified that about 30% of overall Romanian population has never heard of AD. A significant share of population (i.e. 78% of family doctors, 70% of population) tends to deem cognitive decline as normal in elders. Unfortunately, given the lack of nationwide AD standardized care and practice guidelines, such misinterpretation is quite common amongst family physicians (FPs).

Furthermore, healthcare system limitations to FPs may further impede access to specialized care for initial stages of AD and various forms of mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

Conclusions: Given the reluctance of decision makers in quick-solving these aspects and the scarcity of time and financial resources, Romanian FPs can at best just screen for possible cognitive impairment, in an attempt to refer patients to in-hospital settings specialized in diagnostic workup and treatment as early as possible. Such practices are, however, more costly system-wide and can only aggravate the ongoing financial scarcity. Further analysis of cost distribution in AD healthcare is required, in order to more cost-effectively approach primary care and early detection of AD patients.