Modern Opportunities for Rehabilitation of People with Dementia

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He is the happiest man who can set the end of his life
in connection with the beginning
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Dementia is an increasing problem in aging society. Elderly people with dementia do not only require a multi-morbidity therapy but also they need special, professional care in their daily living. It is possible to improve the quality of life and efficiency of these people and the comfort of their caregivers through the implementation of properly specialized rehabilitation. Dementia includes several symptoms, which are usually chronic and progressive. They result from some degenerative changes in the brain, leading to an impairment of higher cortical memory functions, disorders of thought, understanding, orientation, counting, learning abilities, language functions and critical thinking as well as behavioural disorders and personality changes. Consciousness remains undisturbed. Dementia is not a normal process of aging. The six main groups of factors leading to dementia are degenerative changes, vascular, infectious, toxic, metabolic factors as well as CNS injuries.

There is no effective treatment to prevent the development of dementia. In the early stages of the disease, drugs temporarily slow down the development of symptoms. The treatment also includes symptomatic treatment of depression, sleep disorders, anxiety disorders, agitation, hallucinations and delusions. In advanced forms of the disease, care procedures are used in accordance with medical standards.

The purpose of rehabilitation in people with dementia is to stay home (as long as possible), with security and self-service. The basis for comprehensive rehabilitation is to create of a safe environment adapted to disability. It is necessary to avoid hurriedness and urges in the patient’s daily living, to avoid all kinds of changes by imposing an orderly routine of the day and stable order around the patient. The proper way of communicating is essential (short, simple sentences, closed questions, reminders, repetitions). Other facilities include signed items, labeled doors and removal of hazardous objects.

The ability to remain as independent as possible is the most important for the patient. Physiotherapeutic methods include: passive exercises, respiratory exercises, strength training exercises, balance exercises including biofeedback exercises, stretching, swimming, yoga, tai chi, massage, individual motor training, magnetostimulation, magnetotherapy, TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) or general cryotherapy. Providing cognitive rehabilitation helps to attain the highest individual level of mental function and functional independence. These goals may be achieved by memory training, relaxation, meditation therapy, validation strategies, reminiscence therapy, validation therapy, re-training methods to restore life skills, learning compensation skills.

The cognitive rehabilitation program is also based on the use of computer programs combined with neurofeedback. By using all the possibilities of rehabilitation, a person with dementia is able to maintain his or her identity and dignity.

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