Pilot Evaluation of a Dementia Case Finding Clinical Service Using the Informant AD8 for At-Risk Older Adults in Primary Health Care: A Brief Report

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ABSTRACT

Background: An AD8 cut-off score of $\geq 4$ has been reported to successfully detect 90\% of dementia cases in elderly patients aged 75 years and above. Objectives: We investigated the benefits of a pilot clinical service conducted in primary care that used the AD8 to identify patients with dementia in an at-risk population. Method: Patients $\geq 75$ years of age were recruited from a primary health care center in Singapore. Trained nurses administered the AD8 to informants of eligible patients. Patients screened positive (AD8 score $\geq 4$) were referred to specialist memory clinics by primary health care physicians for further evaluation. Results: Of the 551 eligible patients in the primary health care center, 168 (30.5\%) consented and the AD8 was administered to their informants. Among the recruited patients, 23 (13.7\%) were screened positive and 7 (30.4\%) of them accepted referrals to specialist memory clinics. The clinical diagnoses for these patients were as follows: no cognitive impairment (NCI) (n = 1), cognitive impairment no dementia (CIND) (n = 5), and dementia (n = 1). Most of the (98.8\%) nurses found AD8 user-friendly and could track functional decline. Eighteen of the 23 (78.3\%) primary health care physicians who referred patients to specialist memory clinics considered the AD8 useful for facilitating referrals. The remaining physicians (21.7\%) preferred performance-based tests. Conclusion: The AD8 is easily administered by nurses and useful to a majority of primary health care physicians to generate referrals. However, physician preference for performance-based tests and a lower prevalence of dementia in the at-risk population may indicate the need to consider a "2-pronged assessment approach" that combines both performance-based and informant-based brief tests to reduce false positive rates and better detect dementia.

Health services for routine case finding of cognitive impairment (CI) and dementia in primary health care can alleviate significant public health burden secondary to dementia care. As such, brief cognitive assessments have been recommended for expeditious case finding in primary health care settings. Of these assessments, the AD8 is an 8-item informant-based brief cognitive test, which has been validated for the case finding of cognitive dysfunction in primary health care. Furthermore, the informant AD8 has been recommended for dementia case finding in an at-risk primary health care population that includes patients aged 75 years and above. The identification of an at-risk population was based on the finding of a peak in dementia prevalence in patients $\geq 75$ years of age. Previous population studies have also reported a similar peak in the prevalence of Alzheimer disease in the 75 to 84 age group compared...