Changing Patterns of Patient Characteristics in a Memory Clinic in Singapore

April Ka Sin Phua BSocSci a,b, Win King Goh BSc a,b, Serrie Platero Suministrado MD a,b, Saima Hilal MPH a,b, Mohammad Kamran Ikram MD c, Narayanaswamy Venketasubramanian FRCP b,d, Xin Xu PhD a,b,* , Christopher Li-Hsian Chen FRCP a,b

a Department of Pharmacology, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore
b Memory Aging and Cognition Centre, National University Health System, Singapore, Singapore
c Departments of Epidemiology & Neurology, Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
d Raffles Neuroscience Centre, Raffles Hospital, Singapore, Singapore

Keywords:
Memory clinic patient characteristics changing patterns dementia cognitive impairment no dementia public awareness

Abstract

Objectives: Promoting public awareness about dementia has been part of global initiatives in recent years; however, the impact on patterns of patient visits in memory clinics has not been investigated in Asian countries. Hence, the present study sought to investigate longitudinal patterns of patient characteristics among consecutive referrals to a memory clinic in Singapore from 2009 to 2015.

Methods: Consecutive first-visit patients who attended the National University Hospital memory clinic between 2009 and 2015 through referrals from primary and secondary health care services were included in the study. A retrospective review on patient demographics, clinical diagnosis, and Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) was performed. Chi-square and logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the changing patterns of patient characteristics over the 7-year period.

Results: A total of 1075 patients were included in the analysis, among whom 675 (62.8%) were diagnosed with dementia. Over the 7-year period, more dementia-free patients were seen compared to dementia patients (odds ratio [OR] = 1.70, 95% CI = 1.55-1.86). Among patients who visited the memory clinic and were subsequently diagnosed with dementia, an increasing number of mild dementia (CDR = 1) compared to moderate-to-severe dementia (CDR = 2 or 3) cases were found (OR = 1.11, 95% CI = 1.02-1.21).

Conclusion: Changing patterns in characteristics of patients visiting the memory clinic were observed, with an increasing number of patients at a less severe stage of disease seeking medical management. These results suggest that efforts to promote awareness of dementia among the public have been effective. Future studies are recommended to confirm the causes and investigate potential consequences of the changing patterns of memory clinic patients.

As a result of rapidly aging populations, dementia has become a serious public health challenge, particularly in Asia. 1 The crude estimated dementia prevalence according to the World Alzheimer Report (2015) is 46.8 million globally, with 22.9 million in Asia alone. 2 As a consequence of the increasing number of dementia patients, tertiary care facilities with focus care teams such as memory clinics have been developed.

Memory clinics adopt a comprehensive approach in providing assessment, diagnosis, treatment, care, and support as well as conducting research for people with subjective memory complaints. 3-5 Typically, memory clinics are run by a multidisciplinary team consisting of health professionals such as clinicians, psychologists, and nurses to ensure quality services for patients. Memory clinics facilitate early referrals, diagnosis, as well as management of the disease. 6 Moreover, the presence of memory clinics serve to raise

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.
A.K.S.P. and W.K.G. contributed equally to this manuscript.
This study was approved by the National Healthcare Group Domain-Specific Review Board (2016/00514). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.
* Address correspondence to Xin Xu, PhD, Department of Pharmacology, National University Health System, MD3, Level 4, #04-01, 16 Medical Drive, Singapore 117600.
E-mail address: phcxx@nus.edu.sg (X. Xu).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jamda.2016.06.002
1525-8610/C2016 AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine.