Dementia and public health: Promise, pitfalls and progress

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Background: The National Framework for Action on Dementia (NFAD) is a national dementia plan that provides an overarching vision for Australia with clear objectives. The NFAD is currently being reviewed by the Department of Health and Ageing on behalf of the Dementia Working Group, and depending on the outcome of the review, a new Framework may be developed. The Dementia Collaborative Research Centre-Early Diagnosis and Prevention has undertaken independent research to inform the development of the framework.

Method: A review of existing national and international dementia frameworks and strategies was conducted. Frameworks and strategies relating to chronic disease and mental health promotion were also reviewed. In addition, several forums and workshops were conducted to develop consensus in relation to developing recommendations for a new Framework.

Results and outcomes: A number of barriers were identified to applying a population health approach to dementia. Nevertheless, several nations have adopted dementia frameworks that include such an approach and most emphasise increasing public awareness of dementia, early diagnosis and carer support and funding for research. Some strategies also promote the prevention message that ‘what’s good for your heart is good for your brain’.

Conclusion: We conclude that a population health approach can be applied to dementia and as dementia is not currently included within a national mental health or chronic disease framework, a stand-alone framework is recommended. The results of this project will inform dementia policy development with a focus on population health approaches.

Biography

Melinda Martin Khan is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in Geriatric Medicine at The University of Queensland School of Medicine, Australia.

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