

Diversity Programmatic/Policy/Research Implications

In the interest of supporting efforts to improve knowledge and care of Alzheimer's disease and other dementing illnesses in ethnic minority communities the following should be addressed:

- It will be extremely important to describe the unique service needs of minority and ethnic groups in the United States and in other parts of the world. Awareness of unique service needs will result in more so-called "culturally competent" services that are more valued by persons in need of service.
- There is an urgent need for population-specific analysis of health care expenditure and utilization of Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease. If African Americans and other minority groups are shown to have greater AD symptom severity, then current Medicare capitation payments may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- Dementia screening guidelines should be expanded to meet the needs of ethnic minority elderly populations and to address potential comorbid conditions that may differ by ethnicity (U.S. Preventive Task Force, 1996).
- There should be a national call for improved training and education of primary care health professionals on screening for dementia in older ethnic minority populations, including elders for whom English is not their primary language.
- Policy makers need to investigate whether ethnic differences in rates of nursing home use are related to discrimination. The lower rate of Medicaid reimbursement makes a poor minority elderly resident seeking nursing home care a less attractive candidate than a private paying White elder.
- More clinical trials are needed to evaluate population-specific approaches to support caregivers of persons with dementia. The tendency to use less formal long-term care services does not necessarily indicate that their care needs are being met.
- Successful strategies for recruitment and retention of ethnic minorities in clinical trials should be disseminated and replicated in different geographic regions in order to meet the need for more data on the biology and treatment outcomes in underserved populations.
- A substantial investment should be made to expand awards to include more disciplines, to train new minority scientists, and to enhance investigator initiated awards for research among underserved communities.

References

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