

COVID-19: The Dark Side of an Unprecedented Social Isolation in the Elderly

Authors : L. Paulino Ferreira, M. Gomes Neto, M. Duarte, S. Serra

Abstract : Objectives: COVID-19 pandemic has caused older adults to experience a degree of social isolation and loneliness that is unprecedented. Our aim is to review state of the art regarding the consequences of social isolation due to COVID-19 in elderly people. Methods: The authors conducted a search on Medscape and PubMed with the keywords mentioned below, and the most relevant articles were selected. Results: Social isolation leads many elderlies to experience loneliness, anxiety, depression, alcohol abuse, and feelings of abandonment with a perception of being a burden on society. Thus, social isolation has increased the risk for suicide in older people. It is also noteworthy that the exacerbation of psychiatric disorders (such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder) without correct treatment and follow-up also increases suicide risk. Loneliness is also associated with accelerated cognitive deterioration and dementia. Besides that, during social isolation, it could be more difficult for older people to get medication as well as proper health care. It is also noticed an increase in the risk of falls, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise. All this contributes to weakening elderlies' immune systems leading to a higher risk of developing infections, cardiovascular events, and cancer, increasing hospitalization and morbimortality. Conclusion: Social isolation in the elderly has a significant impact on physical and mental health, as well as morbimortality and hospitalizations due to non-COVID causes. Nevertheless, further studies will be needed to assess the real dimension of the effects of social isolation due to COVID-19.

Keywords : social isolation, COVID-19, elderly, mental health

Conference Title : ICGG 2022 : International Conference on Geriatrics and Gerontology

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : August 16-17, 2022