A call for action to tackle the growing burden of dementia

The interAcademy partnership for Health

IAP for Health is a component of the interAcademy Partnership. It comprises a network of health academies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Russia and the Americas, which are committed to promoting health and systemic change. IAP for Health seeks to contribute to the global effort to tackle the growing burden of dementia.

This statement is made from a positive perspective that was initially circulated by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, and written, approved and submitted by the Research Executive Committee (REC) of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging (CCNA).

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We must ensure that national dementia care systems are in place to provide quality care to those living with dementia, and that those systems are sustainable and respectful of human rights. This requires a coordinated approach across different sectors, including health, social services, and the justice system. It also requires a strong commitment to research and innovation, to ensure that the latest evidence is translated into improved care and support for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

The Future of the Dementia Challenge

Dementia will be one of the global pandemics for many decades, reaching levels that are beyond our current understanding. Indeed, even if no one can escape the disease, current trends in demographic, social, and economic factors suggest that dementia will be a major public health challenge for many countries. As the population ages, the number of people living with dementia is expected to increase dramatically, with significant implications for health and social services. Understanding the factors that contribute to dementia, preventing its occurrence, and improving the quality of life for people living with the disease will require a global effort.

1. A Call to Action

Because of these issues, a comprehensive strategy is needed to address the global challenge. This strategy must include a focus on prevention, early detection, and the provision of effective care. It will require collaboration across different sectors and the development of new partnerships. Such a strategy will require a coordinated effort from countries, regions, and communities to ensure that people living with dementia receive the support they need.

2. Elements of an Action Plan to Face the Challenge of Dementia

An action plan to face the challenge of dementia in a global context must include a set of essential elements: awareness and education, prevention and early intervention, health systems and policies, and research and innovation. Such an action plan should include initiatives that can be implemented within existing structures and resources, with a focus on evidence-based practices and ethical considerations.

3. A Model Investment in Research on Dementia

Innovative research is essential to advancing our understanding of dementia and developing effective interventions. This requires a coordinated approach across different sectors, including health, social services, and the justice system. It also requires a strong commitment to research and innovation, to ensure that the latest evidence is translated into improved care and support for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

4. Challenges and Opportunities in Dementia Research

Overcoming the challenges of dementia research requires multidisciplinary approaches, involving scientists from different fields, including medicine, psychology, and social sciences. Such approaches can help us better understand the complex nature of dementia and develop effective interventions.

5. The Required Workforce Must Be Planned and Trained

As a result, a national workforce plan must be developed to ensure that there are enough caregivers and support workers to provide quality care to people living with dementia. The plan should take into account the needs of caregivers and the care system, as well as the availability of resources and support systems. Such a plan will require a coordinated effort from countries, regions, and communities to ensure that people living with dementia receive the support they need.

6. Ensuring It is Possible to Live Well with Dementia

Every country needs to develop a national dementia strategy that focuses on many of these elements. Examples include the National Dementia Strategy in the UK, the Alzheimer’s Association’s Dementia Action Plan in the USA, and the Canadian Alzheimer’s Plan. These strategies provide a framework for governments to develop plans that are tailored to their specific needs and reflect the unique characteristics of their population.

In conclusion, this is a global challenge that requires a global response. We must work together to ensure that people living with dementia receive the support they need to live well, and to ensure that we are able to address the global challenge of dementia in a sustainable and effective way.