

REVIEW ARTICLE

Depression in the Elderly: Limits and Challenges - a Nursing Perspective

Fountouki Antigoni, RN, MSc,

Oncology ward, "AXEPA" Hospital, Thessaloniki

Dimitrios Theofanidis, RN, MSc,

Clinical Professor, Nursing Department, Alexabder Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

Corresponding author:

Dimitrios A. Theofanidis

21 Ierosolimon street, Kalamaria, 55134, Thessaloniki, Greece

E-mail: dimitrisnoni@yahoo.gr Cell phone: 0030 6945227796

ABSTRACT

Introduction: There are many difficulties encountered when diagnosing depression in its early stages in the elderly. The role of the GP is vital for prompt diagnosis.

Aim: The aim of this paper is to provide a critical citation and discussion of the issues involved when diagnosing depression of the elderly in the community.

Method: For this purpose, a systematic literature review of Greek and international databases were performed seeking references on the obstacles encountered when diagnosing depression.

Results: Analysis revealed four major themes under which the papers fell: i) General difficulties in diagnosing depression, ii) The limitations GPs have when they diagnose depression, iii) The limits patients place on GPs during the diagnostic procedure and iv) The limits GPs and patients set on each other when depression is being considered

Conclusions: The findings show that GPs are confronted with numerous detractors which may lead to misdiagnosis especially when depression is mild or moderate. Yet, early recognition can lead to effective treatment. It is suggested that nurses treating hospitalised patients be alerted to the early warning signs of depression in their patients. In order to support GPs and to make things easier for the patient, nurses should be encouraged to use their observation skills during their greater exposure time with the patient and to advise the patient to discuss these with their GP once discharged so that effective treatment can be initiated if necessary.

Key Words: depression, diagnosis, elderly, GPs and limits.