

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

ISRAELI LAYPERSONS` REACTIONS TO BIOMARKERS BASED EARLY PREDICTIVE DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

P. Werner¹, N. Ulitsa¹, H. Abojabel¹

Department of Community Mental Health, University of Haifa, Israel

Background: Recent advances in biomarkers may soon make it possible to identify persons at high risk for late-onset Alzheimer's disease at a pre-symptomatic (preclinical) stage. However, little is known about the opinions and feelings of the public towards early predictive diagnosis.

Study question: What are laypersons` attitudes, emotional reactions, and opinions regarding an early predictive diagnosis of dementia, the disclosure process, and coping strategies?

Methods: Six focus groups were conducted with 42 laypersons (mean age = 58.6, 62% female). Reactions regarding early predictive diagnosis were elicited using an interview guide and the presentation of vignettes. Thematic content analysis was used to extract themes.

Results: Three key themes emerged. Emotional reactions: Participants reported that the disclosure of biomarker tests results will cause mostly negative emotions (fear, anxiety, and depression), and will be accompanied by stigmatic reactions towards the diagnosed person. Disclosure process: Most of the participants stressed the need to disclose the diagnosis to the person himself/herself, and also to family members. Coping strategies: Together with negative coping strategies (denial, anxiety), participants reported the need to use positive mechanisms (starting medications, making financial arrangements).

Conclusions: Careful consideration of laypersons` attitudes and emotional reactions is required before expanding the use of biomarkers for early predictive diagnosis of dementia.

This study was funded by a grant from the German-Israeli Foundation (grant number 384/17to P. Werner