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Burden Beyond the Patient: AAD's Impact on Patients and Caregivers

Announcer:

Welcome to CME on ReachMD. This episode is part of our MinuteCE curriculum.

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Dr. Porteinsson:

This is CME on ReachMD and I'm Dr. Anton Porteinsson. Joining me today is Dr. Brendan Montano.

Brendon, can you tell us a little bit about the impact of agitation in Alzheimer's disease, often referred to as AAD, on both patients and caregivers?

Dr. Montano:

Oh, certainly, Anton. Agitation with Alzheimer's disease is one of the most distressing symptoms that people can have. It's bad, especially for the person who experiences it. They are in frustration frequently, they are losing control frequently, and losing a lot. They're losing their memory and their recall, and they kind of know it at the beginning. So, it's much more depressing and frustrating than anything. Along with that, the person who's caring for them, who's often their significant other, their loved one, is now having to experience a significant change in relationship. And of course, they're worrying, and they're frustrated. They don't know what to do, and they're hoping there's a way that we can assist them. It causes great stress, not only for patients but the declining condition puts the burden on the caregiver, and they often get stressed and they begin to burn out and they get depressed.

Caregivers often have to change their lives to accommodate for their loved one who's suffering with this Alzheimer's dementia, and eventually the caregiver gets to a point where they just can't manage. When that happens, unfortunately, it often predicts the outcome with a transfer to a tertiary care facility, often permanently, and often leads to, even, to an early death.

Dr. Porteinsson:

And Brendan, these behaviors are remarkably common. If you look at basically, the life course of dementia, at any one time, there can be anywhere from a quarter to half of the patients that are expressing or experiencing agitation. And if you look at the lifetime of the dementia, it is just about everyone, about 90%. So, this is not uncommon. It's tremendously important for providers, primary care physicians, as well as others, to be aware of this and understand that the outcomes are so harmful both to the patients and the caregivers. And you highlighted the distress, you highlighted the burden, increased disease burden before the dementia with more rapid progression and worse outcomes, but also other health conditions can be affected as well.

So, it's critical to identify these behaviors to work them up appropriately, and then to intervene at the right time. And in today's world, that falls very much to primary care.

Dr. Montano:

It does, and unfortunately, it seems like it's getting worse overtime and the rates of development of Alzheimer's dementia are going up and up and up. So, it's just presenting a harder and a more what do I want to say? Urgent type of need in a primary care environment for

dealing with this.

Dr. Porteinsson:

Yeah, absolutely a challenge. But there are ways to manage this.

And this has been a great bite-sized discussion. That's our time for this episode. Thanks for listening and more to follow.

Announcer:

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