# 11th International Congress of the IPA
## (International Psychogeriatric Association)

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The leading theme of this congress was 'Enhancing human connection in the age of new technologies: implications and opportunities'. About 1550 participants from more than 62 countries were faced with the challenge of choosing from a cornucopia of 6 plenary sessions, 116 symposia and 294 posters.

In his outstanding public lecture 'Rinsing the challenge of Age' T Kirkwood, UK addressed different fundamental questions of longevity. Longevity is a reality and we live on average twice as long as we did two hundred years ago; 85% of babies born today will reach the age of 65 years. Human beings are programmed to survive and there are no genes which drive ageing, because ageing is caused by the accumulation of damage in cells - e.g. due to impaired DNA copying or repair. Genes determine about 25% of longevity while the rest is governed by environment, nutrition, lifestyle and exercise. The latter variables are potential targets for preventive strategies.

Life-span risk factors for the development of dementia need more consideration in relation to prevention (I Skoog, Sweden). Vascular cognitive impairment (VCI) might be prevented by modifying atherogenic risk factors - and dietary factors such as vitamin E, monosaturated fats and fish consumption (P Gorelick, USA). Of all these risk factors, hypertension in midlife seems to be particularly important for preventive strategies. K Rockwood, Canada presented a three year longitudinal follow-up study of non-cognitive vascular impairment and showed that most common behavioural symptoms are decreased initiative (61%) followed by decreased mood (33%). J O'Brien, UK showed how impairments in processing speed and executive function were associated with severity of white matter hyperintensities and cortical grey matter loss in non-demented stroke survivors. Depression with first onset in old age has been associated with vascular changes seen on neuroimaging (D Steffens, USA) and neuropathological changes, which are different from those found in younger adults (A Thomas, UK). Cerebral vascular factors may associate with a poor outcome (D Ames, Australia) and cognitive impairment related to depression may persist even after recovery of depression and be related to structural brain changes.

The internet is a source for isolated patients with mobility restriction, and increasing numbers of people search the internet for health information, although selection and validation of information remains difficult as there are more than 70,000 health related websites. (S Czaja, USA). Telemedicine is another valuable method which could improve communication among health professionals and reach patients in traditionally underserved institutions such as nursing home residents and patients in rural communities (B Jones, USA and L Van Bussel, Canada). Simulated video presence of a loved family member can improve depression and agitation in nursing home residents (A Hamer, Netherlands) and multi-media profiling including video-interviews can assist carers to access patient information quickly and easily (C Allen, UK).

The potential of new technologies to improve safety in transportation seems enormous. D O'Neill, Ireland addressed driving abilities in elderly, mentally ill patients, who are at risk for driving impairment either due to their illness or their medical treatment. As driving is an overlearned skill, preventive strategies focusing on behavioural and functional impairment might be more effective to detect drivers at risk. The efficacy of preventive screening methods to improve safety has still to be established. Self-regulation of driving in elderly seems to be effective; people aged over 65 have the lowest crash-risk per head, although more fatalities result from each crash. The latter might be due to the fact that car safety equipment, such as airbags, is not yet designed for elderly frail people. The symposium Lewy body disease and dementia (J. O'Brien, UK), addressed clinical boundaries of Dementia with Lewy bodies in comparison to AD and Parkinson's disease dementia (PDD). Compared to AD, DLB is characterised on neuroimaging by greater parieto-occipital hypoperfusion, greater reduction in dopaminergic uptake of caudate and a relative preservation of the temporal lobe and hippocampus. DLB and PDD are differentiated by the sequence of symptom appearance. PDD and DLB share many pathological, neurochemical and clinical features (D Aarsland, Norway) and both are often associated with REM sleep behaviour disorder (B Boeve, USA). R Hamilton, showed how ApoE4 allele is related to widespread LB formation in AD subjects.

J Cohen-Mansfield, USA gave an impressive overview of how non-pharmacological strategies can improve functional status of daily living and behavioural and psychological symptoms in dementia (BPSD). Such interventions include the cognitive, behavioural and social interventions to empower patients. A Parpura-Gill, USA illustrated how bathing, a relevant activity which can increase agitation and be traumatic for patients and caregiver, can be transformed into an engaging therapeutic intervention. D Ripich, USA then illustrated how the FOCUSED communication training program can improve communication skills. Treatment effects of bright light therapy were addressed in another session, where J Byrne, UK presented the findings of a randomised controlled trial, and showed beneficial effects on sleep disorder in dementia.

Pharmacological treatment strategies addressed newer indications of cholinesterase inhibitors (ChE-I) in vascular dementia (S Gauthier, Canada), Dementia with Lewy bodies (K Edwards, USA) and Parkinson's disease dementia (D Aarsland, Norway). Long term treatment (i.e. 24 month) of vascular or mixed vascular dementia with Galantamine in an open label extension study seems safe and effective and treatment effects of donepezil in vascular dementia seems to be comparable to AD (A Burns, UK). ChE-I have also significant efficacy in the treatment of BPSD (e.g. C Holmes, UK; A Monsch, Switzerland). Memantine protected neurons from glutamate neurotoxicity in mice (W Danysz, Germany) and decreased amyloid-€levels in neural cell lines (D Lahiri, USA). The clinical implication of these findings needs to be investigated.

In the final plenary session (G Cohen, USA) discussed the important phenomenon that children have a positive view of elderly relatives, but a biased negative view towards ageing in general. Such a global view may be influenced by the often negative description of elderly in fairytales. Be aware of ageism - improvement of public education may help to bridge between young and old.

The interested reader may find all abstracts of this conference published in: International Psychogeriatrics 2003; 15 (suppl 2): 1- 385.

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