Letter to the Editor

Curling up in end-stage dementia. Body's shift anatomy in retrogenesis

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To the Editor,

There is no dementia disease progression case in which during the end-stage body does not curl up towards the fetal position. Patients with advanced dementia (AD) have been observed to demonstrate various clinical features reminiscent of children. AD late stages manifest a cluster of symptoms like an increase in emotional needs, fears, hallucinations, tremors and anxieties, combined with anatomic changes of the entire body and simultaneous progressive biomechanical shutdown [1]. Reisberg and his colleagues studied AD and based on behavioral, neurological and neuropathological findings proposed the "retrogenesis" model [2]. Patients lose their cognitive skills and movement abilities in a kind of reverse order than they learned them, while emotional needs and anxiety are being increased [3]. Paratonia has emerged as an infantile stabilization reflex, range of motion declines and patients demonstrate hypertonia, with the inability to relax muscles during muscle tone assessment and resistance during passive movement [4]. In end-stage AD, patients don’t move for long periods during the day, while they sleep a lot. Leg and arm muscles are not stretched, become tighten and joints renter locked or frozen in place. Knees remain bent and turning presents a difficulty. Patients become bedridden, head and shoulders shift forwards, chest cage curving inwards and spine shifting from the normal S-curve to a C-position [1,2]. Malnutrition, vitamins and minerals deficiency further affect an organism's condition [5]. It seems that apart from the disorganized brain function and degenerative mechanisms of AD, a gradual but severe re-structure of the anatomic human body figure takes place, resembling an embryo in a womb. AD increasing prevalence with a simultaneously aging of the global population, increase the need for both clinicians and caregivers to comprehend the real needs of demented patients and provide health care that is humane and palliative.

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References


