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Let's take care of the health of our elderly loved ones!

In Hungary, people greatly value older people, who play a fundamental role in our everyday life. In order to preserve their physical and mental health, improve their quality of life, and increase their healthy life expectancy, the Government pays special attention to the treatment of diseases affecting the elderly, including dementia, which is increasingly becoming a widespread disease. According to the latest representative survey by KINCS, 91 percent of Hungarians are aware of the concept of dementia, and 26 percent of them have a relative or acquaintance who has been diagnosed with this disease and in whose care families play a key role.

On October 1, the International Day of Older Persons, we turn with respect and gratitude to the elderly members of our society, who strengthen our families through their knowledge, experience and dedicated work. A previous research by the Mária Kopp Institute also confirms that in our country, the older generations are valued members of families, most of them can count on their family members, whether it is about managing official affairs, health care, or financial support. The Government is also committed to supporting the well-being of the older generations, so since 2010, it has taken a number of steps to ensure that our elderly compatriots can enjoy their everyday lives to the fullest, preserving their physical and mental health. As a result of the measures taken so far, the life prospects of older people have improved. The healthy average life expectancy at age 65 for men in 2023 was 7.1 years, while for women it was 7.8 years, which is 1.6 years higher for men and 1.8 years for women than it was in 2010. However, as the average age increases, the incidence of dementia and other mental illnesses in old age also becomes more frequent, and thus the number of people in need of care and support also increases. In 2020, there were already 187,000 people living with dementia in Hungary, although the number continues to rise every year. According to preliminary estimates, their number could reach 300,000 by 2050, which represents a 60 percent increase compared to the 2020 data.

According to KINCS's latest dementia-related research, 91 percent of Hungarians have heard of senile dementia, with the exception of 18-29-year-olds (83%), the rate of those who are aware of this disease was over 90% in all age groups examined. The respondents mostly consider memory impairment (91%), disturbed behavior (87%) and wandering (85%), least speech impairment (73%) and sleep disturbance (49%) as symptoms of dementia. 26 percent of the respondents have a family member or friend who has been diagnosed with this disease. 60 percent of dementia patients are over 75 years old, 40 percent are between 60 and 74 years old. Of those whose close family members were affected, 36 percent said that one of their parents and 33 percent of one of their grandparents suffered from dementia, 25 percent reported that a distant relative was affected, and 4 percent reported that their spouse was affected. According to nine out of ten respondents, caring for a family member with dementia is both mentally and financially burdensome for a family, and therefore 93 percent of them believe that families caring for relatives with dementia should receive more help.



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According to the current state of medicine, dementia cannot be cured, however, the deterioration can be slowed down, but this requires early recognition and diagnosis of the set of symptoms. The family plays an important role in early detection, as those close to us are the most able to recognize the initial symptoms and draw the attention of the general practitioner to this.

Hungarian families also play a key role in the care of older people living with dementia, as the majority of patients are cared for by their relatives. The Government and various civil organizations therefore pay special attention to the support of caring family members, be it professional advice, mental support or practical help. Care in a familiar environment, a sense of security and maintenance of routines help to stabilize the condition of those affected by dementia, therefore the role of the family in the treatment of dementia is crucial.

In addition, it is important to highlight that among the predisposing factors there are those that can be influenced, thereby reducing the risk of developing dementia. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the role of regular exercise, a healthy diet, the treatment of high blood pressure and diabetes, and the avoidance of head injuries.

More information:

sajto@koppmariaintezet.hu

www.koppmariaintezet.hu

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