

Prevalence of Dementia-Associated Disability Among Chinese Older Adults: Results from a National Sample Survey

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Objective: Due to rapid population aging and a tidal wave of dementia, dementia has become an urgent public health issue in China. Few large-scale surveys on dementia have been conducted in China and little was known about the magnitude of dysfunction and disability caused by dementia. In this study, using national sample survey data, we aimed to describe the prevalence rate of dementia-associated disability, its associated factors, and daily activities and social functions of people with dementia-associated disability in Chinese older adults. **Methods:** We used the second China National Sample Survey on Disability, comprising 2,526,145 persons from 771,797 households. Identification for dementia was based on consensus manuals. Standard weighting procedures were used to construct sample weights considering the multistage stratified cluster sampling survey scheme. Population weighted numbers, weighted prevalence, and the odd ratios (ORs) were calculated. **Results:** The prevalence rate of dementia-associated disability was 4.64% (95% CI: 4.26–5.01) and it accounted for 41.03% of mental disability among Chinese older adults. Urban residence (OR: 1.33 [1.12–1.57]), older age (80+ years) (OR: 4.12 [3.38–.03]), illiteracy (OR: 1.79 [1.27–2.53]), and currently not married (OR: 1.15 [1.00–1.32]) were associated with increased risk of dementia-associated disability. Compared with those with mental disability of other causes and those with other types of disabilities, older adults with dementia-associated disability were more likely to have severe or extreme difficulty in daily activities and social functions. **Conclusion:** Countermeasures are warranted to obtain a more precise overview of dementia in China, and strategies on enhancing early identification, treatment, and rehabilitation should be developed for people with dementia. (Am J Geriatr Psychiatry 2015; 23:320–325)

Key Words: Dementia, disability, Chinese population, older adults

Dementia, as one of the most common diseases in the older adults,¹ affects more than 24.3 million people in the world—and this number will double by

2040.² The prevalence rates of dementia range from 2.8% to 63.0% in different regions of the world.³ The prevalence rates are higher among developed

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regions, but the developing regions have the largest number of people with dementia.² In 2001, more than 60% of demented people lived in developing countries and this number will rise to 71.2% in 2040.² There are approximately 6 million people with dementia in developing countries of the west-Pacific region, and these developing countries will experience a rapid growth of dementia (314%–336%) in the next 20 years.²

Dementia results in the loss of cognitive function and is a leading cause of disability among older adults of all races and regions.⁴ Dementia has become the most important independent contributor to disability for older adults in low- and middle-income countries.⁵ Dementia contributed 11.2% of years lived with disability in people aged 60 years and older.⁶ It was estimated that the global societal cost of dementia was US\$ 422 million in 2009.⁷ Dementia brings a huge burden on individuals, families, and societies, and has been established as a major challenge worldwide.⁸

In China, approximately 5 million people have dementia.² Prevalence rates of dementia in Chinese older adults range from 1.37% to 8.19%,^{2,9–15} and there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of dementia since 1980s.⁹ More women are affected by dementia than men,^{10,13,14} more rural elders have dementia than their urban counterparts,¹⁶ and the prevalence of dementia is higher among the oldest old.¹⁵

Due to rapid population aging in China¹⁷ and the increase of dementia in developing countries worldwide,^{5,18} dementia has become an urgent public health issue in China. Few large-scale surveys on dementia have been conducted in China, however, and the current literature lacks findings based on national data. Additionally, little is known about the magnitude of dysfunction and disability caused by dementia in China. In this study, using national sample survey data, we aimed to describe the prevalence rate of dementia-associated disability, its associated factors, and daily activities and social functions of people with dementia-associated disability in Chinese older adults.

Survey on Disability (CNSSD). This survey was conducted from April 1 to May 31, 2006. The survey used a stratified, multiphased, and cluster probability sampling. A total of 734 counties (cities or districts), 2,980 towns (townships or streets), and 5,964 communities were selected from 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government in China. The target population of the survey was the non-institutionalized community population, and 2,526,145 persons in 771,797 households were investigated. In this study, information of respondents aged 65 years and older was used. Details of the survey sampling procedures have been described elsewhere.¹⁹

Interviewers and Interviewing Procedures

Initially, pre-survey investigation was conducted to determine the number of households, population, and suspected disabled people in the sampling community. After that, face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect information from every family member in the selected households. The CNSSD survey focused on disability and its aim was to describe the prevalence of disability, its associated factors, and the characteristics of people with disabilities in China. Therefore, participants were first screened for disabilities, and those suspected to be disabled were then examined and diagnosed by doctors. People with disability caused by dementia were our study subjects in this article (i.e., dementia-associated disability). Approximately 50,000 survey assistants who conducted pre-survey investigation, 20,000 interviewers who conducted the screen scale, as well as 6,000 doctors of various specialties who made the diagnosis of disabilities and their causes participated in the CNSSD survey. During the survey, the diagnosis of disabilities and their causes, treatment, and rehabilitation suggestions, as well as the information of local hospitals and other health facilities, were provided to people diagnosed as disabled. This survey was approved by the State Council of China, and all respondents gave consent to receive the interview and clinical examination.

METHODS

Sample

Data for this study are derived from a national sample survey, the second China National Sample

Measures

Demographic information such as age, sex, residence location, education level, marital status, and

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