

4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on

# DEMENTIA AND DEMENTIA CARE

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## Dementia and dementia care in Uganda

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Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia is caused by damage to brain cells. This damage interferes with the ability of brain cells to communicate with each other. When brain cells cannot communicate normally, thinking, behavior and feelings can be affected. Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning — thinking, remembering, and reasoning — to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Some people with dementia cannot control their emotions, and their personalities may change. Dementia ranges in severity from the mildest stage, when it is just beginning to affect a person's functioning, to the most severe stage, when the person must depend completely on others for basic activities of daily living, such as feeding oneself. Dementia affects millions of people and is more common as people grow older (about one-third of all people age 85 or older may have some form of dementia) but it is not a normal part of aging. Many people live into their 90s and beyond without any signs of dementia. There are several different forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, which is the most common.

### Situation of Dementia in Uganda:

With the increasing number of people surviving into older age in Africa, dementia is becoming a public health concern. Understanding the social dynamics of dementia in resource-limited settings is critical for developing effective interventions. According to a study report by Judith Owokuhaisa et al from the Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Mbarara University of Science and Technology on the community perceptions about people with dementia in southwestern Uganda. Fifty-nine individuals (aged 19–85 years, 56% female) participated in seven focus group discussions. In

addition, 22 individual in-depth interviews were conducted among individuals (aged 22–84 years, 36% female).

From the interviews above, five themes were generated during content analysis:

- i) Labeling of the illness
- ii) Presentation of the person with dementia
- iii) Causation
- iv) Impact of the disease on people with dementia and their caregivers and
- v) Views on how to address unmet needs in dementia care.

It was found out that the locals knew about Dementia, and commonly referred to it as “okuhuga” or “okwebwayebwa” (also, oruhuzyo/empugye / akahuriko) which translates as “mental disorientation”. The participants reported that most people with dementia presented with forgetfulness, defecating and urinating on themselves, wandering away from home, going out naked, and picking up garbage. Some participants perceived memory problems as a normal part of the aging process, while others attributed the cause of dementia to syphilis, cancer, allergy, old age, satanic powers, witchcraft, poor nutrition, or life stress. Participants reported multiple sources of stress for caregivers of people with dementia, including financial, social, and emotional burdens. Finally, participants suggested that community and governmental organizations should be involved in meeting the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers. Findings from the study largely identified dementia as a problem that comes with older age, and can identify key features of dementia.

Participants in the study identified significant

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stressors affecting people with dementia and their caregivers, and reported that families and caregivers would benefit from education on the

## Biography

Lamot Patrick Louis is a dedicated professional in Border Health Management based in Uganda. His work focuses on addressing health challenges at borders, contributing to the well-being of communities. Louis plays a pivotal

management of symptoms of dementia, and assistance in overcoming associated financial, social, and emotional burdens related to caretaking.

role in managing health initiatives, showcasing a commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes in border regions.

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