The risks of social distancing for older persons

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Social distancing and social health

Social distancing deprives older persons from valuable assets of social health (Huber, 2011; Vernooij-Dassen Jeon, 2016)

- ability to participate in social activities
- response of social environment by actual interactions
Social health and cognitive functioning

- Lack of social interaction associated with incident dementia (Kuiper et al., 2015)
- Quarantine negative association with cognitive functioning (Rohr, 2020; Yu 2020).
- Socially integrated lifestyle favourable influence on cognitive functioning (Bellou, 2017) and could postpone the onset of dementia (Fratiglioni Wang, 2007)
Social health and cognitive functioning hypothesis

**Hypothesis:**

Social interactions may trigger reactions which might require the use of pre-existing cognitive processes or activating compensatory approaches (Fratiglioni2007 Vernooij-Dassen et al., 2019)

**Guiding hypothesis:** Kas et al Funding Memorabel; Ikram et al., Funding JPND)

The risk of extreme social distancing is extreme cognitive and related mental and physical damage

(Photo: Volkskrant 2 May 2020)
Recommendations

Measures mitigating impact social distancing

• Use options to meet, while ensuring safety
• Chats during the day (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)
• Increase social contacts, address maladaptive social cognition (Jeste)
• Take personal responsibility managing feelings of loneliness (Kharicha, 2020)
• Reciprocity: provide support and appreciate support
• Preserve dignity of recipient
• Visit people with dementia as much as possible (Alzheimer Europe)
• Use video communication (WWW.interdem.org blog Chattat)
• Replace touching by verbal expression of affection (CNN), tell a person that she matters

Psychosocial interventions in Covid care:

• Multidisciplinary collaboration
• Psychological first aid
• Self help counseling
• Behavioral management in case of dementia (ADI)
• Palliative care including advance care planning (WHO; Tilburgs 2019, van den Block 2019)