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## Loneliness among seniors

Natalia Skierkowska<sup>1</sup>, Weronika Topka<sup>1</sup>, Małgorzata Kwiatkowska<sup>1</sup>, Monika Prylińska<sup>2</sup>

1. Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Department of Geriatrics Clinic, Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland

2. Division of Ergonomics and Exercise Physiology, Department of Hygiene, Epidemiology, Ergonomics and Postgraduate Education, Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Loneliness is a universal phenomenon that affects people of any age. But it becomes especially painful for people over 60 years of age. Loneliness makes seniors vulnerable to isolation and marginalization.

**Aim:** The aim of the article is to present the topic of loneliness among the elderly.

**Material and methods:** The article analyzes the current literature from EBSCO and Google Scholar websites. The keywords used are: loneliness, elderly, loneliness, senior.

**Results:** Loneliness is one of the greatest problems of the modern world. There are many causes of loneliness from geographic factors to loneliness caused by illness. The factor determining loneliness is the conscious withdrawal of seniors from activity due to, for example, their disability.

**Conclusions:** Loneliness and loneliness contribute to the deterioration of the quality of life of seniors.

**Key words:** loneliness; elder people; solitude; senior;

## **Introduction**

Being alone and loneliness are some of the most noticed problems of older people. They can lead to a strong feeling of emptiness, loss of meaning in life, inactivity, fear, helplessness and, above all, psychophysical suffering. Very often, the elderly live in a strong sense of loneliness and wait only for death [1]. It is related to isolating them from the rest of society, they are deeply stagnant. This negative situation in elderly people often leads to depression [2].

Loneliness has long become a universal and timeless phenomenon in our society. It is a supracultural and ahistorical phenomenon that is permanently recorded in the life of every human being. Loneliness has become one of the so-called the signs of our time [1].

The modern world and rapidly occurring social and cultural changes contribute to the increasing burden of human loneliness. Elderly people are a particularly vulnerable group to loneliness, which is caused by their shaping in a different socio-cultural reality. With their age and development potential it is much more difficult to adapt to sudden and rapid changes. That is why it is such an important topic for science to study loneliness as well as to prepare a person to cope with the new reality through education and lifelong development [1].

### **Being alone and loneliness**

In the definitional understanding, being alone and loneliness are understood in the gerontological literature as two separate terms.

Being alone is called a state resulting from the independent choice of a person and it is also a decision to be with oneself. In this sense, being alone is the need to search for oneself, centralization in one's inner world as well as the desire to achieve the so-called indifference to the world. Being alone causes a person to gain the necessary distance, readiness to resign, distance, and a sense of inner self-sufficiency [3].

Loneliness is a state that is very difficult to define because it can take various forms and is also conditioned by the individual's individual predispositions. Loneliness is a situation when a person does not gain support in others as well as in his inner world. Loneliness may result from the underdevelopment of the internal world, a disturbed order [3, 4].

### **The causes of loneliness**

There are many causes of loneliness among the elderly, but Rembowski lists the following seven groups of factors that have a significant impact on the feeling of loneliness:

- Geographic factors. Very often, elderly people stay in centers far away from their place of residence, it causes a longing for the environment, acquaintances, friends and family.
- Cultural loneliness. It most often occurs when the senior is staying in a different place than the family home, for example in a nursing home.
- Loneliness caused by disease, dysfunction.
- Awareness of impending death.
- Language barriers. They may be caused by difficulties in communicating with other people and may be related to speech impediments.
- Lonely lifestyle. For example, caused by restraint in interpersonal contacts.
- Loss of loved ones [5].

### **Phases of feeling lonely**

Phase 1. In this phase, we notice a decrease in the sense of belonging through characteristic external circumstances. May affect blocking as well as limiting contacts with other people. This affects the elimination of the so-called mutual behavior.

Phase 2. It is characterized by a noticeable loss of trust in maintaining and making contacts and relationships with other people.

Phase 3 is the most extreme phase. The elderly person shows no or no longer able to interact with other people. The senior is convinced that his life and existence are not important and that his environment is indifferent to him [6].

### **Types of loneliness according to the ownership criterion:**

- Residential loneliness, long-term solitary living.
- Subjective loneliness is a strong feeling of loneliness despite living with relatives and family.
- Civil loneliness, this type of loneliness suffers from people: widowed, unmarried, divorced, childless.
- Social loneliness, i.e. lack of contact with family, neighbors or friends [7].

### **Quality of life of seniors**

The quality of life is an ambiguous term, it is not only a physical being but also a spiritual being, the possibility of learning, creativity and creativity. The quality of life is the sum of efforts, internal struggle, the ability to make good choices, compromise, and make the right decisions [8]. The quality of life decreases with increasing age.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), quality of life is the individual perception of one's position in life. The concept of quality of life has many components, it takes into account physical, social, material, emotional well-being as well as self-satisfaction.

K. Baumann defines 13 facts influencing and conditioning the quality of life. Physical well-being (energy, functionality, no pain, adequate time for sleep and rest). Personal well-being (happiness, dignity, mental health, physical appearance, love, no stress). Life satisfaction (fulfillment, serenity, fullness of life). Material and financial well-being (financial independence, possession of goods, financial security). Purpose of life (commitment, altruism, participation in the lives of others).

Social well-being (friendship, social support, family, rich social life). Aesthetic well-being (free time, hobbies, contact with art and music, interests). Moral well-being (a calm and clear conscience). End of life (sense of control, pain minimization, quality of dying). Joy of life (the belief that life was worth living). Living in the present (simplicity, elementary, natural). Spirituality (religious beliefs, personal beliefs). Cheerfulness (having fun, enjoying small and big things) [9, 10].

### **Factors determining the loneliness of the elderly**

There are many factors that determine the feeling of loneliness among people over 60, such as the way in which the elderly are treated by society. Very often, social perception is not reality and stereotypes take over. Often the elderly are discriminated against and mistakenly associated with infirmity or disability. At the very beginning, the elderly are rejected by their age as bad candidates for cooperation or activity.

Elderly people often withdraw from activity. It brings with it a decrease in the circle of friends, isolation and loneliness. Also, placing seniors out of closed establishments entails marginalization and a feeling of rejection. It is mistakenly believed that the family is the guarantor against loneliness, however, it does not guarantee the absence of loneliness, the person who has the family may feel lonely. One of the most acute causes of loneliness is social isolation and disturbed interpersonal relationships. Loneliness may intensify the degradation of body functions, among others. mental and physical disorders. One cannot forget about an important demographic and cultural factor [11, 12, 13, 14].

### **Summary**

Aging is one of the most difficult times in a person's life. It causes a reduction in physical and mental fitness and degradation. It contributes to the reduction of certain activities, emotional and social losses.

Feelings of loneliness and loneliness increase with age. It is determined by many factors, ranging from sociodemographic to cultural ones.

Along with increasing loneliness, the quality of life of seniors decreases, which creates a vicious circle and brings many consequences.

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