CAMPAIGNING ABOUT ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE IN FRANCE (HAUTE VIENNE): IMPACT ON ATTITUDES AND STIGMA

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Introduction: Though national recommendations emphasize the importance of early diagnosis to get better treatment and care, people are often reluctant to screen for Alzheimer’s disease and stigma is expressed.

Aims: In September 2009, conferences and cultural events about Alzheimer’s disease (movies, a play, modern ballet) took place in Haute Vienne (France). We evaluate the impact of this campaign “A different look at Alzheimer” on people’s attitudes and stigma.

Methods: People who attended were asked to fill out questionnaires anonymously to evaluate:

1/ learning about Alzheimer’s disease,

2/ information about screening and care,

3/ keeping contact with people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease,

4/ attitudes towards screening.

Results: Out of the 2240 people who attended, 600 filled in the questionnaire (27%). Most were female (83%), aged under 50 (49%), and working (59.8%). Their knowledge about Alzheimer’s disease increased (59%). 55% had better information about screening and care. A third of the public and a quarter of professionals in medical or social fields were more inclined to keep contact with a person or a family affected by Alzheimer disease. 62, 4% were more willing to go through screening. People who attended the cultural events (movies, play, ballet) tended to be younger and employed in medical or social fields, whereas conferences attracted an older public: the impact was the same.

Conclusion: Campaigns about Alzheimer’s disease can modify attitudes, leading to better screening and reduced stigma. Cultural events are interesting way to reach a younger audience. Long term effects need to be assessed.