
UNDERRECOGNITION OF DEMENTIA IN NURSING HOME RESIDENTS IN TUNISIA

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Background & aims:

Dementia is one of the most common neuropsychiatric disorders in nursing home residents. Despite a high prevalence and a major impact on daily activities, dementia remains largely underdiagnosed and therefore rarely treated in nursing homes throughout the world.

This study aims to determine the prevalence of dementia among residents of Manouba nursing home (in Tunis) and to identify the proportion of recognised cases of dementia among this population.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was performed from September to October 2012 among all consenting residents of Manouba nursing home. Sociodemographic data were collected by the means of a semi-structured questionnaire. Cognitive functions were assessed using the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) test in its Arabic version. We excluded subjects who could not take the MoCA test because of a severe sensory deficit or a severe psychiatric condition.

Results:

At the time of the study, the population of Manouba nursing home residents consisted of 116 subjects. After applying the exclusion criteria, we retained 77 subjects: 48 males (62.3%) and 29 females (37.7%). The average age was 72.6 years. The average MoCA score was 14.4 +/- 6.5 (range: 3 to 29). The prevalence of dementia in our population was 58.4% (n=45). Among these 45 subjects with dementia, only three (or 6.7% of dementia cases) were already diagnosed as such. Of these three patients, only one was on anticholinesterase treatment.

Conclusion:

Dementia is largely underrecognised and hence undertreated in nursing homes in Tunisia as in other countries. Routine screening for cognitive deficits seems paramount in order to ensure early diagnosis and treatment of this debilitating condition.

References:

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