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PREVALENCE OF PARANOID SYMPTOMATOLOGY IN THE ELDERLY AND
RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIC BRAIN FACTORS

M. Serrano Díaz de Otálora, J. Gómez-Arnau Ramírez, R. Martínez de Velasco, P. Artieda Urrutia

Department of Psychiatry, Hospital Ramón y Cajal, Madrid, Spain

Introduction: Psychotic diseases in the elderly are underdiagnosed due to the limited use of medical resources. Advanced age makes psychoses of any cause less pure and differentiated, since old age adds a cognitive-impairment component to the basal psychotic defect.

Objectives: We intend to estimate the prevalence of paranoid symptoms in older patients, and to study the many medical conditions associated with psychosis.

Methods: We conducted a literature review and we have performed a review of several clinical trials.

Results: We found 12.1% of paranoid symptoms in the elderly with cognitive impairment. In absence of this factor, we found a prevalence of 14.1% for suspicion tendencies, 6.9% for paranoid thoughts and 5.5% for evident delusions. These figures were significantly higher in old black people.

We present a table of the main medical conditions that can produce psychotic symptoms.

Some cases of apparently typical delusional disorder can appear as a long-term complication of some of these diseases. If organic factors are subtle and long lasting, the clinical may reproduce a fairly typical delusional disorder and may respond to treatment with neuroleptic drugs.

Conclusions: It seems possible that organic brain factors are more common than we believe, becoming essential a comprehensive study of the old psychotic patient. We should pay more attention to psychotic symptoms in elderly patients and avoid conclusions based on cross-evaluations. Diagnosis will be defined by evolution in most of the cases.