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Sarcopenia screening in primary health

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Background: Few studies have evaluated the tools for screening sarcopenia in elderly people within the Primary Health Care setting. Aim To find applicable screening tools for the identification elderly people with sarcopenia in Primary Health care, with the objective of early diagnosis and intervention.

Material and Methods: A descriptive transversal study of 123 elderly patients (80±3.2 years) in an urban Primary Health Centre, selected from a prospective cohort study initiated in 2006. The data was gathered between April 2013 and July 2014. The diagnosis of sarcopenia, as defined by EWGSOP (European Working Group on Sarcopenia in Older People), is the presence of low muscular mass, measured using bioelectrical impedance (BIA), plus one of the next two factors: low strength (measured in deltoid of non-dominant arm with a myometer, or low performance (measured with a walking test).

Results: Sarcopenia prevalence is 15.4%. We compared the sarcopenia patient group with the non-sarcopenia group. The measures that showed significant differences between the two groups ($p \leq 0.05$) were anthropometric tests: Body Mass Index (BMI), brachial (CB) and thigh (CT) circumferences; as measures of strength and performance: the up and go test; and in comprehensive geriatric assessment: MNA, Barthel and Pfeiffer tests.

Conclusions: Sarcopenia may be detected using simple tools applicable in Primary Health Care. The proposed tools are: the BMI, CB, CT, get up and go, MNA, Barthel and Pfeiffer tests, which can be used as indicators of sarcopenic patients in the elderly population in our community. These could be good screening tools for sarcopenia early detection and intervention.

Key words: Sarcopenia, Primary Care, Ageing