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Knowledge of stroke in patients over 65 years old attended in primary care

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Background and Aim: Stroke affects especially people >65 years. If in 2050 the WHO expects that these patients will be 46% of the population, it is essential that this disease be known to decrease its incidence and mitigate its consequences. This study is designed to determine the degree of knowledge of stroke in patients over 65 years old attended in primary care (terminology, risk factors, suggestive symptoms and attitude to take in case of transitory episode) and inform them about this disease.

Methods: A descriptive transversal study was utilized and a brief self-administered questionnaire of closed questions was passed randomly to the patients ≥ 65 years who came to visit with previous citation at medical and nursing practices of two semi-urban primary care centers. Oral information and a pamphlet about stroke were given after complete the questionnaire.

Results: 304 questionnaires were answered. Age: mean 72.6 and standard deviation ± 16.3 years. 53.6% are women. 51.7% knew the term 'stroke', 72.7% 'cerebral embolism' and 60.5% 'cerebral infarct'. The cardiovascular risk factors more associated to stroke were hypertension (78.9%) and hypercholesterolemia (74%); cardiac arrhythmia (44.7%) and diabetes mellitus (41.2%) were less related with it. 28.9% of respondents said that hypertension was the most important risk factor to suffer a stroke. 77% recognized the speech disturbance and 65.5% identified the decreased strength in a limb as alarm symptoms, 60.5% reported both symptoms. 87.1% would request urgent medical assistance if suspected a stroke, but the 24.3% of the surveyed patients would not consult urgently in case of transitory ischemic attack.

Conclusions: It is necessary to increase the knowledge of stroke, especially to the patients more susceptible to suffer it. Individual counselling and community educational activities from primary care should be enhanced for maximum dissemination of knowledge of stroke.