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Clinical characteristics and survival in polymedicated elderly patients

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Background and Aim: To describe the clinical characteristics of polymedicated elderly patients in Primary Care and analyze their survival estimated as a function of comorbidity.

Method: Cross-sectional study made in six consultations of family medicine of four basic areas of health. 275 individuals ≥ 65 years who consumed more than five drugs for at least six months were selected through consecutive sampling. Sociodemographic variables, cardiovascular risk factors, health problems (CIAP-2 classification), drug consumption and survival estimated by the Charlson comorbidity index (CCI) were collected. Descriptive, bivariate and multivariate (multiple linear regression) analyzes were performed.

Results: The mean age was 76.5 years (SD: 6.7). 55.6% suffered from more than five diseases. The most common health problems were endocrinological 93.8%, cardiovascular 92,0%, locomotive 57.8%, respiratory 25.8%, digestive 24.0% and psychological 22.3%. 85.8% had hypertension, 57.1% dyslipidemia and 41.1% diabetes. The average number of drugs consumed was 8.2. (SD: 2.1). The median survival estimated at 10 years by CCI was 24.4% (interquartile range, 1.1% -53.4%). Survival showed a statistically significant inverse correlation regarding the number of health problems (r=-0,309; p<0,001) and the number of drugs (r=-0,285, p<0,001). Through adjustment with a multiple linear regression model, the variables associated with increased survival estimated at 10 years were: younger age, female sex, less number of drugs consumed, and absence of ischemic heart disease, stroke, peripheral artery disease, heart failure, diabetes, digestive, respiratory and urological problems.

Conclusions: The vast majority of polymedicated elderly patients have endocrine and cardiovascular diseases. More than half of them suffer from more than five pathologies. Survival in polymedicated elderly people is related with the variables included in the CCI as with others such as sex, number of drugs consumed and the presence of any Urological, digestive or respiratory problems.