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The paper of primary care on the war against cancer

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Background: More than 60% of all cancer deaths occur in the elderly and, overall, the new treatments have not improved the survival significantly. In addition to optimize the treatment in specialized services, our role in primary care is to act in the prevention and early detection of tumor process.

Aim: To determine the prevalence of cancer in the elderly population assigned to our Primary Care Center and the relationship with chronic diseases controlled from primary care.

Methodology: This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study. All patients over 60 years of age (N = 2523) were included and their medical records were reviewed to select cases with active cancer diagnosis. for data comparison chi square and Student test were used as necessary.

Results: A total of 269 cases (prevalence 10.6%) were observed. Tumors of the male genital tract, including prostate, were the most prevalent (24.5%), followed by abdominal tumors (17.8%), female genital tumors, including breast (13.4%), urinary (10.4 %), hematologic (4.8%), endocrine (4.5%), respiratory (4.1%), neck tumors (2.6%) and CNS (0.7%). The prevalence was higher in men (14.0% vs 7.7%, $p < 0.001$), older age (7.4% in 60-69 years, 12.4% in 70-79 years and 15.8% in ≥ 80 years, $p < 0.001$). Also was higher in patients with diabetes mellitus (12.9% vs 10.0%, $p = 0.045$) or in COPD (15.0% vs 10.2%, $p = 0.027$). No significant differences were detected for obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse.

Conclusions: In our population, the prevalence of cancer is in the lower range described for this age but has the same distribution pattern (more prevalent in old age and in men). Our results also point to an association with chronic diseases such as diabetes or COPD, although other risk factors already demonstrated, such as obesity, smoking or alcohol abuse not showed a significant association, probably due to lack of sample size.

All authors declare no competing interests.