

Drug Utilization Pattern Among Community-Dwelling Elderly

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Abstract: Drug therapy among elderly has significant benefits in managing different geriatric health problems. However, it is associated with many adverse effects and several drug related problems. In the present study, a house-to-house survey was conducted in a squatter area in Alexandria to assess the pattern of drug consumption among community-dwelling elderly. The study included 311 elderly, an interview questionnaire was designed to collect data about their socio-demographic characteristics, number and types of drugs they were using, medical history and site of medical care. Knowledge of elderly about their current medications, errors in drug intake and compliance with their drug regimens were also assessed. Results revealed that more than half of the elderly [54.7%] were using drugs and the mean number of drugs taken was 2.35 ± 1.37 . Logistic regression analysis revealed that drug usage was more common among widowed or divorced elderly and among those complaining of higher number of chronic illnesses. The mean number of drugs taken was also significantly related to the number of chronic illnesses. More than two thirds of elderly [69.4%] had insufficient knowledge about the drugs they were taking. More than one quarter of elderly drug users [29.4%] were non-compliant with their drug regimens. Non-compliance was more common among the younger age group [60-74years], among those treated by more than one physician and among arthritic patients. The main reasons for non-compliance as reported by the elderly were high cost of drugs, forgetfulness, feeling better and occurrence of side effects. Errors in drug intake were detected in more than a quarter of the elderly drug users [28.8%]. The number of drugs taken and knowledge about them were the only significant factors related to occurrence of errors in drug intake. The most common types of errors in drug intake were taking drugs on-need basis, utilization of inappropriate drugs and lower dosages than recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Population aging presents a new and serious challenge for public health. Life expectancy has risen sharply this century, and is expected to rise in virtually all populations throughout the world. There are currently 580 million people in the world who

are aged 60 years or older. This figure is expected to rise to 1,000 million by 2020 most of them will be living in developing countries.¹

Drug therapy among the elderly acquires an increasing importance nowadays. It provides significant benefits in managing

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