

Geriatric psychiatry in nursing homes in the Canton Basel-Stadt

The view of general practitioners

Introduction

Society is getting older and the number of people living in nursing homes is increasing. Somatic and psychiatric diseases are common. In the Kanton Basel-Stadt health care to nursing home inhabitants is provided by general practitioners (GP).

The aim of this study was to investigate the burden of psycho-geriatric conditions and their treatment in nursing home residents in Basel. Furthermore, GPs were asked if they wish a broader and more structured ambulatory psycho-geriatric service.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was performed. 233 questionnaires were sent to all GPs in Basel-Stadt.

The 5-paged questionnaire was created by the authors and consisted of 31 questions on:

- GPs demographics
- Patients psychiatric condition
- GPs valuation of the psychiatric care situation (measured by marks 1 to 6 according to the Swiss school ranking system).
- Most common psychotropic drugs prescribed
- GPs view on and potential mode of an ambulatory psycho-geriatric service

Results were analysed for differences in gender, age and mode (n of GPs in a practice) of the GPs office.

Conclusion

The majority of GPs in Basel-Stadt are in favour of a reorganization of the existing ambulatory psycho-geriatric service. GPs reported a high percentage of psychiatric disorders among nursing home residents comparable to the literature. We can recommend restructuring of the existing offer of psycho-geriatric services in the canton of Basel-Stadt. Further, we found a possible imbalance between the most prevalent psychiatric symptoms and the most often prescribed psychotropic drug class, a fact that should be further investigated.

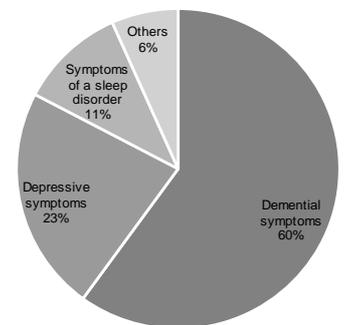
Results

Response rate was 45.5% (106 questionnaires sent back). 19 GPs were excluded, mainly for three reasons: retirement, not having nursing home patients or working as a specialist and not as a GP. Data of 87 GPs was analysed.

On average, they cared for **16.5 nursing home patients**, male GPs cared for more nursing home patients than female GPs ($p=0.027$) whereas there was no difference in terms of the mode of the practice or age.

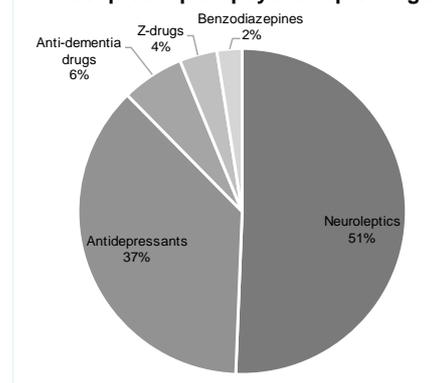
GPs stated, that **63.1%** of their nursing home patients had **psychiatric symptoms**. Demential symptoms (60%), depressive symptoms (23%) and symptoms of a sleeping disorders (11%) were most common. More than half (56%) of the GPs had ever hospitalised nursing home patients because of psychiatric symptoms.

Most prevalent psychiatric symptoms



GPs rated the **access to psychiatrists** with 3.7, a mark which is **insufficient** according to the Swiss school rating system. The **collaboration with the nursing staff** in the nursing homes was rated with 4.7, which is between **sufficient** (4) and **good** (5).

Most prescribed psychotropic drugs



Most often prescribed psychotropic drugs were **neuroleptics agents (51%)** and **antidepressants (37%)**.

The **vast majority (89%)** of GPs are in **favour** of the **implementation** of a broader and clearly structured ambulatory psycho-geriatric service. The most chosen option was a consultation service available Mon-Fri between 08.00-12.00 and 14.00-17.00.