

Awareness campaign on Atrial Fibrillation in Portuguese community pharmacies – preliminary results

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1. Background and Objectives

In Portugal, Atrial Fibrillation (AF) has a rate of under-detection of, approximately, 36.0% and one in three strokes is due to AF (1,2).

Community pharmacies are the most easily accessible health care resource for citizens, and constitute therefore the ideal venue to undertake awareness campaigns and also to develop screening activities.

The purpose of the study was to raise awareness of AF by conducting an information campaign, showing how to pulse take. The secondary goal was to detect and refer possible undiagnosed cases, with signs and/or symptoms suggestive of AF.

2. Methods

Cross-sectional study

Pharmacies recruitment

24 Portuguese community pharmacies were purposively selected and invited to participate in this study



e-Learning course for community pharmacists

This course focused on:

- 1) how to check the pulse rate (https://youtu.be/K_KZIOSOOTg);
- 2) how the study was to be conducted and what pharmacists should know about AF.

Study period: 2 days up to 2 weeks

Patient recruitment

All patients entering the pharmacy during the study period were invited



Application of a Checklist

Presence of symptoms, medical and pharmacotherapeutic history

Pulse Check

≥100 beats per minute or irregular pulse

Family doctor for further evaluation

Data analysis: Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 22.0 (uni- and bivariate analysis)

3. Results

Main results of this campaign

1. Patients recruitment

868 patients were recruited and 63.9% (n=555) of those were female. The mean age was 65.6 (SD=15.9) years old and 4.1% (n=36) had already a previous diagnose of AF.

Nearly a quarter of the sample was on anticoagulation (16.4%; n=37) or antiplatelet (83.6%; n= 189) therapy.

A



B



Figure 1: A – Community Pharmacist handing flyers with information on AF; B – Patient having his pulse taken by a Community Pharmacist

2. Pulse Check and Patients referred

34 patients (3.9%) were referred to the general practitioner: 97.1% (n=33) were referred due to irregular pulse and just one patient (2.9%) presented a heart beat above 100 beats per minute.

Two patients (5.9%) were diagnosed with AF and they were prescribed with dabigatran and digoxin.

5. Discussion and conclusion

- This awareness campaign showed that involving pharmacists can be a successful way to raise the general population's knowledge of AF;
- It was also a way to increase the rate of early detection of cardiac abnormalities (like AF);
- This pilot study was also conducted in other countries: Spain, UK, Canada and New Zealand. Portugal was the country able to recruit more patients within this short time frame, highlighting the potential and motivation of pharmacists to provide additional services. Many confirmations are still pending in Portugal. In some countries, it was possible to confirm pulse check using AliveCor, which is an advantage (UK). On the other hand, other Health care systems (Canada) enabled quick contact for diagnosis confirmation, an obvious benefit.

References

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