

Characteristics of nursing home residents with extreme agitation: the WAALBED III Study

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Background

Agitation is a key feature in people with dementia and an important reason for admission to a nursing home. Some have extreme agitation. Hardly any literature about the characteristics of these residents is available.

Objectives

- (1) To explore the prevalence and characteristics of nursing home residents with extreme agitation;
- (2) To study the differences of residents with extreme agitation as compared to those without.

Design & Methods

Data of four studies in nursing home residents with dementia was combined into one dataset:

- WAALBED-I study (cross-sectional study, n=1322)¹
- WAALBED-II study (longitudinal study; n=290)²
- Dementia Care Mapping study (randomized controlled trial; n=318)³
- GRIP on challenging behavior (randomized controlled trial; n= 659)⁴

Inclusion criteria

- Meeting the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fourth edition criteria for dementia
- No terminal illness (life expectancy < 4 weeks) at the time of inclusion
- Residing in the nursing home for at least four weeks

Definition

Extreme agitation: those scoring in the upper 10 percent of the Cohen Mansfield Agitation Index total score, or having a score of 6 (several times a day) or 7 (several times an hour) on at least 5 CMAI-items.

Without agitation: a CMAI score of 1 (never) on all items.

Statistics

Differences between patients with extreme agitation and those without were analysed using independent two samples t-tests and Chi square tests.

Results

Characteristics of the residents enrolled in the study

	Extreme Agitation	Without Agitation	P-value	
Number of residents n=564	348	216		
Age	Mean (SD) Range	81.59 (7.41) 55-98	82.97 (7.55) 56-101	0.033
Sex (% female)		79.6	79.6	0.993
Marital status (n=465)				0.171
Married/civil partnership/ unmarried but living together/living together (%)		20.1	25.0	
Widow/widower (%)		63.9	64.3	
Divorced/unmarried (%)		16.0	10.7	
Duration of institutionalization (months) (n=563)	Mean (SD) Range	25.10(23.32) 0.00-175.24	35.47(35.33) 0.00-219.27	0.000
Global Deterioration Scale (GDS)				0.000
GDS 4 (%)		2.0	6.0	
GDS 5 (%)		13.5	22.2	
GDS 6 (%)		68.1	37.5	
GDS 7 (%)		16.4	34.3	
Psychotropic drug use (%) (n=556)		78.9	41.1	0.000
Antipsychotic drugs (%)		52.3	13.1	0.000
Antidepressant drugs (%)		36.0	19.6	0.000
Hypnotics (%)		15.8	7.5	0.004
Anxiolytic drugs (%)		24.6	6.5	0.000
Antiepileptic drugs (%)		7.3	5.1	0.312
Cholinesterase inhibitors (%)		3.5	2.8	0.648

Conclusion

Nursing home residents with dementia with extreme agitation have a lower mean age, a different severity of dementia (majority in GDS 6) and a shorter duration of stay compared to residents without extreme agitation. Additionally, the prevalence of psychotropic drug use was higher in the extreme agitation group, with higher prescription rates of antipsychotic drugs, antidepressant drugs, anxiolytic drugs and hypnotics.

References

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