Abstract form

Title: The General Practitioners’ approach to diagnosis, disclosure and management of dementia in the Maltese islands

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Abstract

There is no data on clinical diagnosis and management of dementia in the Maltese islands. The aim of the study is to evaluate the general practitioners’ (GPs) approach to dementia focusing on Alzheimer’s disease (AD). An anonymous questionnaire was mailed to members of the Malta College of Family Doctors. Questions were sectioned in four main data groups; Demographic, Diagnosis, Disclosure and Treatment. The diagnosis section looked into the recognition of the main clinical features, differential diagnosis and assessment tools. While 76% of the respondents called for a national protocol for diagnosis of AD, only 39% correctly excluded all other possible differentials. In agreement with international literature, less than 30% routinely disclose dementia diagnosis. From a pharmacologic point of view, GPs were asked about their treatment preferences, aim of outcome, reasons for choice, frequency of follow-up and criteria for cessation of therapy. Pharmacological agents with proven and unproven benefits were listed for choice according to frequency of use in different stages of disease. Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (AChEI) are the mainstay of AD treatment and were selected as first choice preference in treatment of mild to moderate AD by 24% of GPs. Alternative methods of therapy were met by the highest rate of absenteeism. Adequate community management can improve early diagnosis rate, reduce social dependence and improve public awareness but this needs support. This study aims at providing data which can form part of the basis for better care of persons with dementia in the community.

Key words: Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, general practitioner, diagnosis, disclosure, management