Abstract

Epilepsy's overall prevalence in Colombia is 1.13%. Its prevalence in patients aged over 65 could be around 1.5%. Objective: describe demographic and clinical characteristics of patients older than 65 years of age with epilepsy. Materials and methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out in two high complexity hospitals in Bogotá, Colombia during 2005-2008. Demographic data were compiled and patients characterized regarding the type, frequency and diagnosis of seizures (based on ILAE classification), probable etiology, having a family background of epilepsy, and current pharmacological management. Results: 211 clinical histories were reviewed and 179 of them selected. Mean patient age was 75 (65-98) and average age at onset of epilepsy was 67.5 (7-93). 84% of the seizures were classified as being focal. The most frequently occurring diagnosis was symptomatic focal epilepsy (94.4%). 74 cases (41.3%) had an etiological diagnosis. The most important cause was cerebrovascular disease (61 patients). First generation anti-epileptic drugs were the most used ones (99%). 81/104 patients were found not to be free from epileptic episodes. Conclusions: Most seizures have a partial beginning, resulting from symptomatic partial epilepsy as a consequence of a vascular lesion. Pharmacological treatment must be considered following the first seizure. Treatment with second generation anti-epileptic drugs such as Lamotrigine, Gabapentin, Levetiracetam and Topiramate must be begun for minimizing secondary effects and low doses must be maintained from the start of treatment. Costs may limit the use of the above antiepileptic drugs, in such cases Phenytoin and Carbamazepine may be used with extreme caution.

Keywords

Epilepsy, aged, geriatrics, neurology, anticonvulsants.