Abstract

The elderly population is one of the most rapidly increasing populations in the world. Physiological alterations induced by the aging process make these individuals more susceptible to chronic diseases and, consequently, to increased drug utilization. Objective: To describe the profile of drug utilization in the elderly living in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. Methods: An observational and cross-sectional population-based study to investigate the characteristics of the population, sources of information and types of drugs used by the elderly was performed. Four hundred and eighty patients were recruited from data supplied by the City Hall of Porto Alegre. The elderly were interviewed individually during the period from January to May 2006 by trained interviewers. A validated pharmacotherapy questionnaire was used for data collection and data were tabulated and analyzed by the SPSS 11.5 computer program. Results: Of the 480 patients interviewed, 13.8% did not use any medication. Cardiovascular system drugs represented the pharmacological class most used by the elderly (64.0%). When ill, 71.9% of these individuals visited the doctor, while 36.9% self-medicated. For the majority (50.2%), drugs were identified by their labels. Only 41.2% of the elderly understood medical prescriptions and 68.3% of the patients studied obtained the necessary information for the appropriate use of therapy from their doctors. Conclusions: The present study suggests that a pharmaceutical care program for the treatment, prevention, and use of medications may provide a higher efficiency to elderly drug therapy.

Keywords

Drug Utilization, Polypharmacy, Aged, Brazil.