

P03-93

ANXIETY DISORDERS IN THE ELDERLY: SUB-DIAGNOSIS AND SUB-TREATMENT

L.C. Castro¹, T. Salgado², M. Simões³, C. Paz², O. Ribeiro⁴

¹*Department of Psychiatry, Hospital de Magalhães Lemos,* ²*Department of Psychogeriatry, Hospital de Magalhães Lemos, Porto,* ³*Department of Psychiatry, Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico de Coimbra, Coimbra,* ⁴*Department of Psychology, School of Health Sciences of the University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal*

Background: Although anxiety disorders prevalence and incidence decline in later life, anxiety is a major health problem for the elderly. Epidemiology, neurobiology, and treatment of anxiety disorders are poorly studied in the geriatric population. Nevertheless, anxiety has a high impact on functional status and health-related quality of life.

Aim: To underline the significant impact of anxiety in the elderly. To discuss the sub-diagnosis and sub-treatment of late-life anxiety and subclinical symptoms.

Methods: Literature Review. MEDLINE and PubMed databases searches for peer-reviewed studies, published between 1998 and 2008, using combinations of the Medline Subject Heading terms anxiety, anxiety disorders and old age.

Results: There are few studies in the literature addressing this topic. Late-life anxiety has a high prevalence and is associated with increased morbidity, mortality, functional impairment, poorer quality of life and significant societal costs. Clinical studies show that most cases of anxiety disorders in late life are undetected and under-treated. Intervention research in late-life anxiety disorders is lacking.

Conclusions: It is extremely important and urgent a more efficacious assessment and management of anxiety disorders in the elderly. It is also fundamental an increased attention to subthreshold anxiety, which will allow an earlier intervention and prevention of new cases of anxiety disorders. Well designed interventions will be capable of reducing the burden, morbidity and incidence of late-life anxiety.