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THE PREVALENCE OF UNEXPLAINED CHRONIC PAIN COMPLAINTS IN APPARENTLY HEALTHY ELDERLY SUBJECTS

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Introduction: Studies regarding chronic pain have demonstrated that there is a high prevalence of this condition in 65 years of age and older population.

Our study objectives was to assess the prevalence of chronic pain in a sample of older subjects without known or diagnosed pathology, and without analgesic routine use. It was a preliminary step in assessing the effects of aerobic exercise on this condition (as part of a research project supported by The National Council of the Higher Education's Scientific Research - CNCSIS).

Methods: A complete anamnesis and routine laboratory was performed for each subject. Subjective tools (Faces Scale and the Visual Analog Scale) was used for assessment of pain, and two self-report measures of anxiety (Beck Anxiety Inventory, and Visual Analogue Scale) was used for assessment of anxiety.

Results: Of 136 subjects enrolled (Av. Age 64±4) 39 subjects (28.67%) presented chronic pain. In bivariate analyses pain was associated with anxiety, negative life events, loneliness, sedentary life.

Discussion: Despite the apparent health of the subjects involved in this study the prevalence of unexplained chronic pain complaints was high. It seems necessary to explore more this condition in general practice in older to highlight any specific cases, in order to reach diagnoses and to select the treatment or, considering the subjective nature of this entity and the associated features of aging in absence of any identifiable pathology, to select an appropriate intervention to improve the quality of life for this people.