

460 - Unmet needs and loneliness perception among elderly people with chronic diseases

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Introduction: Unwanted loneliness is a public health issue due to its high prevalence among elderly people (20-40%) and its relation with morbidity and mortality. There is no clear strategy for addressing this problem given the diversity of needs and resources people with feelings of loneliness have.

Objective: Identify the needs and resources of elderly people with chronic conditions and feelings of loneliness by comparing the patient's outlook with that of their primary healthcare professional.

Methods: Observational, cross-sectional, descriptive pilot study using theoretical convenience sampling at 5 health facilities in Barcelona (Spain), performed between October and May 2020. Of 159 people selected, 42 were identified to have feelings of loneliness (UCLA < 30) who agreed to participate in the study and their care needs were analysed using the Camberwell Assessment of Need for the Elderly (CANE) questionnaire. A descriptive and comparative analysis (Kappa coefficient and discrepancy percentage) of needs was performed using the outlook of the patients and their healthcare professionals. Data was analysed using SAS assuming a 5% significance level. A qualitative analysis was also performed to understand the relation between the feeling of loneliness and needs across 24 care areas (environmental, social, psychological, and physical). The study was approved by the IDIAP Jordi Gol Healthcare Ethics Committee (19/138-P).

Findings: The needs perceived focused on physical health, distress, companionship, and relationships (30% to 41.7%). Professionals showed a severe lack of knowledge regarding housing, home care, relationships, and social services (22% to 48%). The qualitative analysis revealed the relation between the feeling of loneliness and the irreversible losses of those close to the patient, along with insufficient support and understanding during the aging process, and feelings of abandonment and guilt. Meanwhile, other notable aspects include the need of independence and resistance towards starting activities requiring commitment and travel. Caring for others and mobility and sensory restrictions act as extra barriers.

Conclusions: This study enables the needs of people with feelings of loneliness to be identified. Discrepancies between them and their healthcare professionals were recorded, in turn providing direction regarding which areas need to be improved when designing patient-focused primary healthcare approaches.