

Functional Vision of Older People in Galician Nursing Homes

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Abstract : Early detection of visual problems plays a key role in the aging process. However, although vision problems are common among older people, the percentage of aging people who perform regular optometric exams is low. In fact, uncorrected refractive errors are one of the main causes of visual impairment in this group of the population. Purpose: To evaluate functional vision of older residents in order to show the urgent need of visual screening programs in Galician nursing homes. Methodology: We examined 364 older adults aged 65 years and over. To measure vision of the daily living, we tested distance and near presenting visual acuity (binocular visual acuity with habitual correction if worn, directional E-Snellen) Presenting near vision was tested at the usual working distance. We defined visual impairment (distance and near) as a presenting visual acuity less than 0.3. Exclusion criteria included immobilized residents unable to reach the USC Dual Sensory Loss Unit for visual screening. Association between categorical variables was performed using chi-square tests. We used Pearson and Spearman correlation tests and the variance analysis to determine differences between groups of interest. Results: 23,1% of participants have visual impairment for distance vision and 16,4% for near vision. The percentage of residents with far and near visual impairment reaches 8,2%. As expected, prevalence of visual impairment increases with age. No differences exist with regard to the level of functional vision between gender. Differences exist between age group respect to distance vision, but not in case of near vision. Conclusion: prevalence of visual impairment is high among the older people tested in this pilot study. This means a high percentage of older people with limitations in their daily life activities. It is necessary to develop an effective vision screening program for early detection of vision problems in Galician nursing homes.

Keywords : functional vision, elders, aging, nursing homes

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