

Awareness campaign on Atrial Fibrillation in Portuguese community pharmacies ? preliminary results

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Background In Portugal, Atrial Fibrillation (AF) has a rate of under-detection of, approximately, 36.0% and one in three strokes is due to AF. Community pharmacies are the most easily accessible health care resource for citizens, and constitute therefore the ideal venue to search for people with possible cardiac abnormalities, such as AF.

Purpose To raise awareness of AF by conducting a screening campaign aiming to search for people with signs and/or symptoms suggestive of AF in the general population; and to pulse take all patients agreeing to participate.

Method A cross-sectional study was conducted during one week (21th until 26th of November of 2016) in 24 community pharmacies in mainland Portugal. Pharmacies from Spain, New Zealand, Canada and UK also joined this initiative. This abstract reports the findings from two of these located in the Lisbon area. Patients resorting to those pharmacies during the campaign period were invited to join. Those agreeing, had their pulse taken manually by their pharmacist, were applied a checklist evaluating the presence of symptoms, medical and pharmacotherapeutic history. If the patient's pulse was above 100 beats per minute or irregular, the pharmacist referred the patient to the family doctor for further evaluation. Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS v. 22.0 (uni- and bi-variated analysis).

Findings A total of 21 patients were recruited. The majority of the sample was female (n=15; 71.4%) and the mean age of the participants was 57.90 years old (SD=16.02). In these preliminary results, two patients (9.5%) were referred to the family doctor for further evaluation. One of them presented a heartbeat above 100 beats per minute, an irregular pulse and characteristic symptoms (shortness of breath at rest, tiredness and lower limb edema); the second patient was asymptomatic and simply presented an irregular pulse. None of the patients was medicated with OAC, but the first was taking low-dose aspirin. No confirmation was yet received from the physician.

Conclusion These preliminary results show that this awareness campaign can be a successful way to not only raise the general population's knowledge of this condition, but also possibly to increase the rate of early detection of cardiac abnormalities, including AF. The target sample for each pharmacy is 100 participants, hence more results will be presented at the conference.