

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN BELGIAN NURSING HOMES: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS AT THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

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Background and methodology

Rationale:

- In Belgium, the burden of healthcare-associated infections (HAI) in nursing homes (NH) is high (3.5%)¹, even more so in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Preliminary project on infection prevention and control (IPC) in NH² highlighted:
 - gaps in IPC expertise in NH,
 - lack of awareness of general practitioners (GPs) and major difficulties in mobilizing them around the issue of HAI.

Aim:

- To assess knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding IPC of Belgian GPs working in NH.

Methods

- Study design: cross-sectional. Online questionnaire (LimeSurvey).
- Population: convenience sample of 18.554 GPs, reached via professional organisations and medical journals.
- Timeline: February-March 2020.
- Four main survey topics:
 1. Antimicrobial (AM) stewardship,
 2. Prevention and control of HAI,
 3. Collaboration between GPs and the coordinating NH physicians (MCCs),
 4. Hand hygiene (HH).
- Analysis: descriptive, performed on STATA-16. Open-ended questions coded and analysed in Excel.

Results

General information

- 192 eligible respondents (1%).
- 25 years of experience on average.
- 54% were GPs **and** MCCs.
- Good regional representativity.
- 43% never received training in IPC.

1. Antimicrobial stewardship

- Overall good knowledge.
- Attitudes towards AM prescription:
 - Should be left to GPs,
 - Should be based on existing national guidelines,
 - Can be discussed with MCCs.
- 47% reviewed their prescriptions after 48h.

2. HAI

- HAI prevalence in NH overestimated.
- Main HAI in NH properly identified.
- Risk factors considered most important to act on:
 - Overuse / misuse of antimicrobials,
 - pressure ulcers and wounds,
 - malnutrition,
 - poor HH.
- Need for training for both NH teams and GPs.

3. Collaboration GPs - MCCs

- Communication ± satisfactory but insufficient.
- Lack of training and information on IPC.

Results

4. Hand hygiene

- 84% used hydro-alcoholic solution.
- 51% practiced HH before touching a patient.
- 27% practiced HH rarely or never after contact with the patient's environment.
- 63% wore jewellery.
- 30% never cleaned their personal equipment.
- Lack of hydro-alcoholic solution dispensers and disposable tissues in NH highlighted.

References

1. Ben Abdelhafidh L. and Latour K. Les infections liées aux soins et l'usage d'antimicrobiens en maison de repos et de soins en Belgique. Résultats de l'étude de prévalence ponctuelle HALT-3. (Septembre - novembre 2016). Brussels; 2017
2. Mathys P. Gestion des infections liées aux soins en MRS et MRPS. Rapport rédigé pour le SPF Santé Publique. 2014

Conclusion

- Knowledge seemed satisfactory.
- Positive attitudes towards improving IPC in NH.
- Gaps highlighted, especially in the field of hand hygiene.

Recommendations

- Offer **training** to GPs, during basic and continuous medical education, face-to-face and via e-learning.
- Enhance communication with MCCs: set up regular meetings.
- Ensure better support to MCCs.
- Ensure provision of hygiene equipment in NH rooms and corridors.