Characterization of legal drug use in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence

Caracterización del consumo de drogas legales en adultos mayores cuidadores víctimas de violencia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: drug use affects the health and quality of life of individuals, being understood as a determinant for healthy aging in older adults.

Objective: to characterize the use of legal drugs in elderly caregivers who are victims of violence.

Methods: a descriptive study was carried out in clinic 23 of the Emilio Daudinot Bueno Polyclinic from May 2022 to May 2023. With a population of 307 older adults and the intentional sampling of 57 caregivers who were victims of domestic violence. The primary data were obtained from documentary review, interviews and surveys and included percentage analysis for the variables age, sex, manifestations of violence, consumption of coffee, tobacco, alcohol and psychotropic drugs, according to whether or not there was a medical prescription. The ethical principles for research were taken into account.

Results: the predominant age group was 60-65 years old, female sex and psychological manifestations of violence. Most of the older adults were abusive consumers of coffee, tobacco, alcohol and medicines, the latter outside medical prescription. They were represented in tables.

Conclusions: the consumption of legal drugs in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence was characterized, identifying inadequate behaviors for healthy aging in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence.

Keywords: Legal Drug Use; Older Adult Caregivers; Violence; Quality of Life; Healthy Aging.
RESUMEN

Introducción: el consumo de drogas afecta la salud y la calidad de vida de los individuos, entendiéndose como determinante para el envejecimiento saludable en adultos mayores.

Objetivo: caracterizar el consumo de drogas legales en adultos mayores cuidadores víctimas de violencia.

Método: se realizó un estudio de carácter descriptivo, en el consultorio 23 del Policlínico Emilio Daudinot Bueno de mayo 2022 a mayo del 2023. Con una población de 307 adultos mayores y el muestreo intencional de 57 cuidadores víctimas de violencia intrafamiliar. Se obtuvo el dato primario a partir de la revisión documental, entrevista y encuestas e incluyó el análisis porcentual para las variables edad, sexo, manifestaciones de violencia, consumo de café, tabaco, alcohol y medicamentos psicotrópicos, según el antecedente o no de prescripción médica. Se tuvieron en cuenta los principios éticos para la investigación.

Resultados: predominó el grupo de edad de 60-65 años y el sexo femenino y las manifestaciones de violencia psicológicas. La mayoría de los adultos mayores consume de forma abusiva café, tabaco, alcohol y medicamentos, estos últimos fuera de la prescripción médica. Se representaron en tablas.

Conclusiones: se caracterizó el consumo de drogas legales en adultos mayores cuidadores víctimas de violencia, identificándose como conductas inadecuadas para el envejecimiento saludable en adultos mayores cuidadores víctimas de violencia.

Palabras clave: Consumo de Drogas Legales; Adultos Mayores Cuidadores; Violencia; Calidad de Vida; Envejecimiento Saludable.

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a universal and heterogeneous process conditioned by increased life expectancy and decreased fertility and birth rates.

In response to the need to age with quality of life, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period 2021-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Aging, led and implemented by WHO; the decade is a project that aims to reduce health inequalities and improve the lives of older people, their families, and their communities.\(^{(1,2)}\)

Healthy aging depends on several determinants surrounding individuals, families, and nations. Among these determinants are behavioral and social determinants. Legal drug use is among the former, and violence and abuse are among the latter.\(^{3}\) These behaviors affect the health and quality of life of these older individuals and their healthy aging.

At the international level, great interest is given to these problems due to the physical, psychological, and moral damage they cause, as they can even lead to death. For this reason, research on the consumption of legal drugs and individuals over 60 years of age at international\(^{(4,5,6,7,8)}\) and national levels,\(^{(9,10,11)}\) have shown results that confirm the excessive consumption of legal drugs in individuals belonging to this population group and the need to pay attention to it by members of the scientific community.

On the other hand, there are international references on the subject of violence in older adults in European countries.\(^{(12,13)}\) Its authors have referred to the different forms of mistreatment and relate them to the performance of the caring role for these individuals. Likewise, in Latin American countries, several scholars have investigated violence in this group of vulnerable individuals.\(^{(14,15,16)}\) They consider that

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violence in older adults is becoming increasingly visible, even though its causes are not precisely known. In addition, they relate this social phenomenon to family dysfunction.

In explorations carried out by Cuban researchers on the prevention of violence in the elderly, they point out that it is a problem of violence in the elderly.\(^{(17,18,19)}\) They emphasize the need to favor and encourage acceptance and respect towards the elderly from an early age and to go towards the search for meanings and social values of old age. In addition, further research is needed to deepen the understanding of the scope and causes of the problem.

In Guantánamo, there are references to the researcher Isalgué Marcillí and collaborators. Those that address violence in older adults\(^{(20,21,22)}\) and those that provide results on this problem and the consumption of legal drugs and alcohol.\(^{(23,24)}\) She emphasizes some social factors related to the causes and sustainability of these social and health problems. In addition, it asserts that the prevention of violence and this toxic habit contributes to aging with quality of life.

However, so far, there are no references in Cuba that investigate the use of legal drugs in older adults who are victims of violence and who are family caregivers.

From this point of view, the authors consider that the delimitation of the manifestations of violence in elderly caregivers and its coexistence with the practice of legal drug use needs more specific precisions and more complete theoretical elaborations. The figure of the older adult becomes more visible in his role as a family caregiver, coined by the characteristics of the contemporary family and social context. This is the reason why, in the present research, the following objective is assumed: to characterize the consumption of legal drugs in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence.

**METHODS**

A descriptive study was conducted in clinic 23 of the Emilio Daudinot Bueno Polyclinic from May 2022 to May 2023, with a population of 307 older adults and an intentional sampling of 57 caregivers who were victims of domestic violence. Using the family medical history book, individuals aged 60 years and older who played the role of family caregiver and were interested in participating in the study and who confirmed their desire by signing the informed consent form were selected. The survey was applied to identify any of the manifestations of domestic violence until reaching 57 older adult caregivers who were victims of violence in any of its manifestations, who formed the study sample and had to meet the following selection criteria: older adults with mental aptitude, belonging to the population of the Family Doctor’s and Nurse’s Offices involved in the research study, willingness to participate in the study through informed consent and those in whom manifestations of domestic violence were identified and who played the role of family caregivers. Primary data was obtained on the characterization of the older adult caregivers according to age and sex, the manifestations of violence present in the family context according to the response of the older adult caregivers who were victims of violence through the in-depth interview. Similarly, the consumption of legal drugs (coffee, alcohol, tobacco, and psychotropic drugs) was characterized according to whether or not a physician prescribed them through the use of a questionnaire. The following criteria were taken into account:

Coffee consumption is considered abusive when the older adult consumes more than four cups per day, and non-abusive consumption is if he/she drinks 1 to 3 cups per day. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).\(^{(25)}\)

Alcohol consumption; the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria were considered.\(^{(26)}\)

Heavy drinking is defined as consuming the following: in women, 8 or more drinks per week. In men, 15 or more drinks per week. The classification is adopted:

- Abstinence: no alcohol consumption.
- Non-abusive consumption: Consumption does not exceed 7 drinks per week for women and 14 drinks per week for men.
• Abusive consumption: When consumption exceeds 8 drinks per week for women and 15 drinks per week for men.
• Tobacco use: 2 criteria were considered: tobacco use and non-use. Assuming the criteria of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which considers that cigarette smoking is always harmful to health.

Consumption of psychotropic drugs, if these are consumed under medical prescription or without medical prescription. These were chosen because they produce alterations if the doses and circumstances do not demand their consumption.

Data processing included calculating summary measures for qualitative variables, absolute frequencies, and percentages.

For the discussion and interpretation of the results, a review of the specialized and updated literature was carried out, comparing the results obtained with similar studies; the criteria of the research authors were presented, allowing conclusions to be reached. The results are represented in tables.

Ethical aspects related to biomedical research were taken into account in this research. In addition, using informed consent, the willingness to participate in the study was obtained, being signed by both the respondent or interviewee and the interviewer or interviewer. In the document, the objective and importance of their participation in the research were made known to them, and it was also explained that their intervention was anonymous and that they could leave the study at any time if they so decided, without this affecting the quality of the medical care provided by the work team.

RESULTS

The study carried out reflects a predominance of the female sex, with 35 patients for 61.4 %. The most significant number of older adults are represented in the group of 60 - 65 years, with 22 patients, for 38.6 %. The results are shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups (Years)</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 60-65</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 66-71</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 72-76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 77-81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the study of the theoretical references, researchers point out that the predominant group is the female sex, aged between 71 and 81 years. At the same time, Castro and collaborators testify that there is a high prevalence in the male sex. Regarding age, Rodríguez Calvo argues that the most frequent ages are between 70 and 80. Arguments that differ from the research presented only coincide in that the female sex is the most affected. In the author's opinion, this last result is influenced by the patriarchal culture, whose social representation is that women should be in charge of housework, especially family care.

Table 2 reflects the manifestations of violence in older adult caregivers present in the family context. According to the responses of the older adults, psychological violence predominated, with 100 % of the older adults having been victims of psychological violence at some point in time. In second place came the manifestations of violence due to abandonment and negligence; in third place, manifestations of economic or financial violence; and finally, physical violence, for 82.4 %, 43.8 % and 14.4 %, respectively.
In a general sense, psychological violence was dominated by scolding (71.9%), the use of gesticulations (68.4%), and refusals to participate in the resolution of conflicts in the home (61.4%). Notably, 82.4% of older adult caregivers refer to the lack of adult companionship for long periods of time in the home. The latter could lead to feelings of loneliness and depression, which negatively influences the mental health of the older adult caregiver.

When analyzing the results obtained on the manifestations of violence in older adult caregivers in the sample, they do not differ from those obtained by other researchers. They affirm that these manifestations of violence against the elderly exist in almost all homes and that, sometimes, it is not well perceived. García Rosique affirms that this type of mistreatment could be related to inadequate responses received by the elderly, as well as dismissing their opinions or even not taking them into account when making decisions.\(^{(18)}\)

The results obtained differ from those expressed by the researcher, who highlights the use of obscene words and mockery (64.2%), offenses and intimidation, and the threat of institutionalization in nursing homes (67.8%) and repeated scolding in 88.8%.\(^{(17)}\)

In this sense, in another research conducted by the author, it is highlighted that older adults are victims of feelings of loneliness, noting that 86.9% of the sample studied refers that during the day they spend many hours alone because their relatives work or because they are in other activities outside the home. Even when some members are in the home, they feel lonely.\(^{(24)}\) Considering that the lack of adult companionship for long periods in the home could lead to feelings of loneliness and depression, this has a negative influence on the mental health of the elderly caregiver.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Manifestations of violence reported by older adult caregivers who were victims of violence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations of physical violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal (older adult caregivers who reported some manifestation of physical violence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations of psychological violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscene words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats of abandonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of gesticulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats of placement in nursing homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal to participate in conflict resolution in the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing, offenses and intimidation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal (older adult caregivers who reported some manifestation of psychological violence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations of economic or financial violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent use of the checkbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal (older adult caregivers who reported some manifestation of economic or financial violence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment and neglect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adult companionship for long periods of time at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal (elderly caregivers who reported some manifestation of violence due to Abandonment and Neglect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the consumption of legal drugs in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence are shown in table 3. It shows that the highest percentage of older adult caregivers (n=31) were found to have an abusive consumption of coffee (54.4 %), 77.1 % are smokers, and 27 of those studied consumed alcohol in a non-abusive manner, which represents 47.3 % of the total. All of the older adults consume psychotropic drugs, with a predominance of those who do so under medical prescription, 46 for 80.8 %.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal drugs</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Abusive consumption</th>
<th>Non-abusive consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Abusive consumption</td>
<td>31 54.4</td>
<td>26 45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>44 77.1</td>
<td>13 22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Abstinence</td>
<td>12 21.1</td>
<td>27 78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications</td>
<td>Consumption under medical prescription</td>
<td>46 80.8</td>
<td>11 19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotropics</td>
<td>Consumption without medical prescription</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase in life expectancy and the population of individuals over 60 years of age produce social changes that presuppose a transformation in lifestyles that demand the implementation of strategies oriented to their resolution to improve their quality of life. In a study carried out in Chile, it was found that older Chilean adults have a high prevalence of tobacco consumption, which is detrimental to healthy aging.\(^{(4)}\)

The Argentinean researcher Carnevali de Falke found that older adults did not consume coffee excessively.\(^{(5)}\) This result coincides with those of research on the subject, where the highest percentage (37.7 %) consumed alcohol occasionally, followed by those who did not consume (27.2 %) 23. The National Institute on Drug Abuse,\(^{(6)}\) stated that more than a tenth of adults aged 65 years or older currently binge drink, which is defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion for men and four or more drinks on the same occasion for women. They differ from those who found a low percentage of elderly alcoholics.\(^{(9)}\) About the consumption of psychotropic drugs, research concluded that more than 80 % of the participants took at least one prescribed drug daily.\(^{(8)}\) For his part, Verdaguer Pérez found that the family physician prescribed 23.1 % of psychotropic drugs, and 36.4 % were prescribed without medical indication. This result does not coincide with those revealed in the present study.\(^{(10)}\)

### CONCLUSIONS

The use of legal drugs in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence was characterized and identified as inappropriate behavior for healthy aging in older adult caregivers who are victims of violence.

### REFERENCES


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