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### ONCOLOGICAL PATIENTS WITH PALLIATIVE CARE NEEDS IN AN INTERNAL MEDICINE SERVICE

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#### Background

Cancer patients are frequently admitted to hospital due to acute conditions or refractory symptoms. In this study, we decided to analyze the characteristics of our cancer patients, their prevalence and comorbidities, as well as, the assessment to potential need for palliative care.

#### Methods

A cross-sectional observational study was conducted on patients admitted to the internal medicine service of a portuguese university hospital. Demographic information, clinical data and the results associated with NECPAL CCOMS-ICO 3.1. were recorded from each patient.

#### Results

One hundred and thirty-two patients were analysed, of whom 39 were diagnosed with neoplasia. The mean age of cancer patients was  $79.5 \pm 7.8$  years (56.4% female). Most of these were dependent on at least one activity of daily living (74.4%), had several comorbidities (mean Charlson comorbidity index 6.0), were polymedicated (89.7%) and 15 were institutionalized. The most prevalent cancers were: colorectal (25.6%); lung (15.6%); prostate, liver, breast and uterus (10.2%); head and neck (7.7%), pancreas (5.1%), central nervous system and ovary (2.6%). Twelve had metastasis. Respiratory failure was the leading cause of admission (51.2%); other complications were pneumonia (38.5%); acute heart failure (30.7%); urinary tract infections (23.1%) and gastrointestinal disorders (20.5%). The NECPAL score was positive in the majority (61.5%), nevertheless 89.7% of patients had not been considered to a palliative care unit.

#### Discussion

The prevalence of patients requiring palliative care identified in this study makes evident the need to follow the programs in line with most recent health policies. Was notice a considerable lack of awareness about the use of NECPAL score as a tool for identifying patients needing palliative care.

#### Conclusion

A minority of patients with palliative needs are effectively referenced and such action has a devastating effect on their quality of life. It's important to implement a program of dissemination and training for health professionals.

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