



REVIEW ARTICLE

The prevalence of oral anticoagulation in patients with atrial fibrillation in Portugal: Systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies[☆]



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KEYWORDS

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Anticoagulation;
Prevalence;
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Warfarin;
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Abstract

Introduction and Objectives: Oral anticoagulation (OAC) is an effective treatment in the prevention of thromboembolic events in patients with atrial fibrillation (AF). The aim of this review was to estimate the prevalence of OAC therapy in patients with AF in Portugal.

Methods: MEDLINE, the Index of Portuguese Medical Journals and SIBUL (the Bibliographic Catalog of the Integrated Library System of the University of Lisbon) were searched for Portuguese observational studies reporting the proportion of anticoagulated patients with AF. The pooled estimated prevalence of anticoagulated patients and respective 95% confidence interval (CI) were determined by means of a meta-analysis.

Results: Seven studies were included for analysis, of which four were conducted in a hospital environment and three in the general community. These studies enrolled a total of 891 patients with AF. The pooled estimated prevalence of anticoagulated patients was 40% (95% CI: 32–48%).

Conclusions: The prevalence of OAC in Portuguese AF patients is low. There is a need to promote change in OAC prescribing habits for AF patients in Portugal, in accordance with international guidelines.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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Antagonistas da
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Prevalência da anticoagulação oral em doentes com fibrilhação auricular em Portugal: revisão sistemática e meta-análise de estudos observacionais
Resumo

Introdução e objetivo: A anticoagulação oral é uma terapêutica eficaz na prevenção de eventos tromboembólicos, em doentes com fibrilhação auricular (FA). A presente revisão pretendeu estimar a prevalência da terapêutica anticoagulante oral em doentes com FA em Portugal.

Métodos: Foi realizada uma pesquisa nas bases de dados MEDLINE, Índice de Revistas Médicas Portuguesas e Catálogo Bibliográfico do Sistema Integrado de Bibliotecas da antiga Universidade Clássica de Lisboa (SIBUL). Estudos observacionais nacionais que reportavam a proporção de doentes anticoagulados com fibrilhação auricular foram incluídos. A estimativa combinada de prevalência de doentes com FA anticoagulados e o respetivo intervalo de confiança 95% (IC95%) foi determinada com recurso a meta-análise.

Resultados: Dos sete estudos incluídos, três estudos foram realizados em ambiente hospitalar e quatro foram realizados na comunidade em geral. Do total de 891 doentes com FA, a estimativa de prevalência de doentes anticoagulados foi de 40% (IC95% 32-48%).

Conclusões: A prevalência de doentes com FA anticoagulados na população estudada é baixa. É necessário promover a mudança dos hábitos de prescrição de anticoagulantes em doentes com FA em Portugal, em concordância com as recomendações internacionais.

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Introduction

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common arrhythmia in clinical practice, with an estimated prevalence of 2.5% in the Portuguese population aged 40 and over according to the FAMA study. The prevalence increases with age, reaching 6.6% in the group aged 70 and over and 10.5% in those aged 80 and over.¹

In the FAMA study, a third of patients with AF were not aware that they had the condition. As AF can remain silent until complications occur,^{2,3} clinical screening is indicated for individuals aged 65 or over.⁴ The main complications of AF are thromboembolic events, particularly stroke. For prevention of such events oral anticoagulation therapy (OAC) is recommended in patients with thromboembolic risk factors.⁴

The aim of this review was to estimate the prevalence of OAC therapy in patients with AF in Portugal by means of a systematic review and meta-analysis of epidemiologic studies.

Methods**Selection criteria**

Observational studies performed in mainland Portugal and/or the islands of Madeira and the Azores that enrolled patients with AF or atrial flutter (whether paroxysmal, persistent or permanent) and reported the proportion of anticoagulated patients were included. Studies on specific populations or on specific interventions such as AF ablation were excluded since inclusion of patients who are not representative of the general AF population would introduce bias.

Databases and searches

MEDLINE, the Index of Portuguese Medical Journals and SIBUL (the Bibliographic Catalog of the Integrated Library System of the University of Lisbon) were searched. The search included review of the references lists of the studies and literature reviews found, but did not include abstracts of posters or oral communications at congresses.

Selection of studies and data extraction

Potentially eligible studies were selected independently by two of the authors using the above inclusion and exclusion criteria and entered in a data extraction form showing the demographic characteristics of the study, the thromboembolic risk factors of the population and the proportion of anticoagulated patients.

The selected studies were assessed qualitatively using criteria related to sampling, measurement and analysis.⁵ No study was excluded on the basis of possible bias.

Any disagreement between the investigators was resolved by consensus.

Data synthesis

The Stata® Statistical Software Package, version 11.0 (StataCorp LP, College Station, TX), was used to synthesise the results through meta-analysis and to determine the pooled estimated prevalence of anticoagulated AF patients. In studies that stratified the population's thromboembolic risk, the denominator of prevalence was the proportion of patients indicated for OAC. The results of the individual and pooled studies were expressed in percentages (prevalence) and

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