



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Workload of on-call emergency room neurologists in a Spanish tertiary care centre. A one-year prospective study^{☆,☆☆}

P.M. Rodríguez Cruz^{a,*}, J.R. Pérez Sánchez^a, J.P. Cuello^a, P. Sobrino García^a, G. Vicente Peracho^a, A. García Arratibel^a, D. Sánchez Guzmán^a, N. Bravo Quelle^a, B. Gutiérrez Ruano^a, C. Alarcón Morcillo^b, F. Cordido Henríquez^a, F. Romero Delgado^a, A. Muñoz González^a, R. Domínguez Rubio^a, A.M. Iglesias Mohedano^a, M.L. Martín Barriga^a, B. de la Casa Fages^a, F. Díaz Otero^{a,c}, D. Ezpeleta^d, A. García Pastor^{a,c}, A. Gil Núñez^{a,c}

^a Servicio de Neurología, Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Madrid, Spain

^b Servicio de Neurología, Hospital La Zarzuela, Madrid, Spain

^c Unidad de Ictus, Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Madrid, Spain

^d Servicio de Neurología, Hospital Universitario Quirón, Madrid, Spain

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Spain

Abstract

Introduction: Population ageing, the rising demand for healthcare, and the establishment of acute stroke treatment programs have given rise to increases in the number and complexity of neurological emergency cases. Nevertheless, many centres in Spain still lack on-call emergency neurologists.

Methods: We conducted a retrospective study to describe the role of on-call neurologists at Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, a tertiary care centre in Madrid, Spain. Sociodemographic characteristics, most common pathologies, diagnostic tests, and destination of the patients attended were recorded daily using a computer database. Results were compared with the general care data from the emergency department.

Results: The team attended 3234 patients (3.48% of the emergency department total). The mean number of patients attended per day was 11.15. The most frequent pathologies were

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^{☆☆} These results have been partially presented at the 15th Congress of the European Federation of Neurological Societies (EFNS), under the title "Neurology on-call coverage in a Spanish tertiary academic hospital: a prospective one-year study". P1815. *Eur J Neurol*. 19 Suppl. 1; 90–457.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: rodriguezcruzpm@gmail.com (P.M. Rodríguez Cruz).

PALABRAS CLAVE

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stroke (34%), epilepsy (16%) and headache (8%). The mean stay in the emergency department was 7.17 hours. Hospital admission rate was 40% (7.38% of emergency hospital admissions). The main destinations for admitted patients were the stroke unit (39.5%) and the neurology department (33%). Endovascular or thrombolytic therapies were performed on 76 occasions. Doctors attended 70% of the patients during on-call hours.

Conclusions: Emergency neurological care is varied, complex, and frequently necessary. Neurological cases account for a sizeable percentage of both patient visits to the emergency room and the total number of emergency admissions. The current data confirm that on-call neurologists available on a 24-hour basis are needed in emergency departments.

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Labor asistencial del equipo de guardia de neurología en un hospital terciario de Madrid: análisis prospectivo durante un año

Resumen

Introducción: El envejecimiento poblacional, el aumento en la demanda asistencial y la instauración de tratamientos avanzados para el ictus agudo han originado que las urgencias neurológicas crezcan en número y complejidad. A pesar de esto, muchos centros hospitalarios de España carecen de guardias específicas de Neurología.

Métodos: Estudio prospectivo durante un año (agosto 2010-julio 2011), que describe la labor asistencial del equipo de guardia de Neurología del Hospital terciario Gregorio Marañón de Madrid. Se recogieron las características sociodemográficas, las principales afecciones, las pruebas diagnósticas y el flujo de los pacientes atendidos, utilizando un registro diario mediante una base de datos informatizada. Los resultados fueron comparados con la asistencia médica general en urgencias.

Resultados: Se atendió a 3.234 pacientes (3.48% del total de urgencias médicas), con una media de 11.15 pacientes/día. La edad media fue de 59 años. Las enfermedades más frecuentes fueron la cerebrovascular (34%), epilepsia (16%) y cefalea (8%). La estancia media en urgencias fue de 7.17 h. La tasa de ingreso hospitalario fue del 40% (7.38% del total de ingresos urgentes por afección médica). Los principales destinos de los pacientes hospitalizados fueron Unidad de Ictus (39.5%) y la planta de Neurología (33%). Se realizaron 76 procedimientos trombolíticos o intravasculares en ictus agudos. El 70% de los pacientes fue valorado fuera del horario laboral.

Conclusiones: La atención neurológica es frecuente, variada y compleja, representando un alto porcentaje sobre el total de paciente atendidos o ingresados en urgencias. Nuestros resultados justifican la presencia física de un neurólogo de guardia 24 h en urgencias.

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Introduction

Care for neurological patients in emergency departments is attracting growing interest.^{1–5} The rising demand for neurological care, population ageing, new developments in neuroimaging scans, and the implementation of advanced treatments for acute stroke have resulted in increases in the number and complexity of neurological emergency cases. On-call neurology teams available on a 24-hour basis in hospital emergency departments are becoming increasingly necessary.^{1,6,7} This situation, associated with the substantial societal and healthcare impact of neurological disorders, has led to a significant rise in the number of positions available for neurology specialists and neurology residents (120 positions in the 2012 round of hiring).^{6,8,9} An on-call neurologist has also been proved to deliver better quality care and appropriate patient referrals, reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, and promote the neurology department.^{10–12} Despite the above, many Spanish hospitals still do not have an on-call neurologist for emergency patients; in the Region

of Madrid, for example, there are only 6 hospitals in which neurologists work 24-hour on-call shifts and directly supervise the neurology resident.¹³

This one-year prospective study aims to describe the workload of on-call emergency room neurologists in Madrid at Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón (HGUGM).

Materials and methods

HGUGM is a public hospital in the Madrid healthcare area; it has 1671 beds and serves a population of 317 940 inhabitants.¹⁴ It is the centre of reference for specialist care in former Health District 1 in the Region of Madrid (792 972 inhabitants) and its stroke unit provides care to a total of 1 043 972 inhabitants.^{14,15}

At HGUGM, the medical emergency department consists of the outpatient area, observation area, high dependency unit (HDU), and accident and emergency cubicles. Patients

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