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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

RECALMIN. Patient care in the internal medicine units of the Spanish national health system☆

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KEYWORDS
Internal medicine;
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Abstract
Objectives: To perform a situation analysis of the care provided by internal medicine units (IMUs) in Spain and to develop, based on this analysis, proposals for improving the quality of care in these units.
Material and methods: A descriptive, cross-sectional study of the IMUs of general acute care hospitals of the Spanish National Health System (SNHS), with data referring to 2013. The study variables were collected via an *ad hoc* questionnaire.
Results: Of the total 260 hospitals identified in the SNHS, 142 responses were obtained from 139 hospitals throughout Spain, which represents 53.5% of the IMUs in the SNHS. The mean number of internists per IMU was 14 ± 8, with a mean rate of 7.2 ± 3.3 internists per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2013, the average number of hospital discharges from the IMU was 2987 ± 2066, and those discharged by internists was 232 ± 107. Sixty-one percent of the IMUs had implemented an interconsultation unit, and 41% had implemented a systematic care program for complex chronic patients. Thirty-three percent of the IMUs conducted multidisciplinary rounds, and 60% of these IMUs planned the discharge.

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Conclusions: The 2013 RECALMIN survey revealed a number of important aspects of the organization, structure and management of IMUs. The remarkable variability in the indicators of structure, activity and management probably reflect significant differences in efficiency and productivity, which therefore provide significant room for improvement.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Medicina interna;
Actividad asistencial;
Indicadores;
Calidad

RECALMIN. La atención al paciente en las unidades de Medicina Interna del Sistema Nacional de Salud

Resumen
Objetivos: Elaborar un diagnóstico de situación sobre la asistencia en las unidades de medicina interna (UMI) en España y desarrollar, basándose en el análisis anterior, propuestas de mejora de calidad en dichas unidades.
Material y métodos: Estudio descriptivo transversal entre las UMI de hospitales generales de agudos del Sistema Nacional de Salud (SNS), con datos referidos a 2013. Las variables de estudio fueron recogidas mediante un cuestionario *ad hoc*.
Resultados: De un total de 260 hospitales identificados en el SNS español, se han obtenido 142 respuestas de 139 hospitales de toda España, que representan el 53,5% de las UMI del SNS. La media de internistas por UMI fue de 14 ± 8, siendo la tasa media de internistas por cada 100.000 habitantes de $7{,}2 \pm 3{,}3$. El promedio de altas hospitalarias de las UMI en 2013 fue de 2.987 ± 2.066 y las altas anuales por internista 232 ± 107. El 61% de las UMI ha desarrollado una unidad de interconsulta y el 41% un programa de atención sistemática al paciente crónico complejo. En el 33% de las UMI se realiza un pase de visita multidisciplinar y un 60% de las mismas planifica el alta.
Conclusiones: La encuesta RECALMIN 2013 desvela aspectos relevantes sobre la organización, estructura y gestión de las UMI. La notable variabilidad hallada en los indicadores de estructura, actividad y gestión probablemente refleja diferencias notables en eficiencia y productividad y, por tanto, propicia un amplio margen de mejora.

Background

There is a pronounced tendency in developed Western countries toward professionalism and self-regulation.[1,2] In 2002, the scientific associations of internal medicine (IM) of Europe and the United States jointly published ''Medical Professionalism in the New Millennium: A Physician Charter''.[3] This framework encompasses the activities of the Spanish Society of Internal Medicine (SEMI) in clinical management[4–10] and in its collaboration with the Ministry of Health on various projects.[11–13] In 2008, SEMI conducted a survey on the healthcare offerings of internal medicine units (IMUs).[12] In 2009, SEMI analyzed the IM activity of hospitals in the Spanish National Health System (NHS).[13] In collaboration with the Institute for Improving Health Care Foundation, SEMI has developed the Resources and Quality of Internal Medicine (RECALMIN) project, whose objectives are as follows: (1) To perform a situation analysis of care in the IMU and (2) to develop proposals for improving the quality and efficiency of these units. The RECALMIN study has 2 major aspects: (1) to record (by means of a survey) the resources, activity and quality of IMUs and (2) to investigate the relationship between structure and processes (survey) on one hand and results (minimum basic data set [MBDS]) on the other. The aim of this article is to present the survey's results.

Material and methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted of the IMUs of the Spanish NHS, with data referencing 2013. We considered IMUs integrated within general hospitals for acutely ill patients. We therefore excluded hospitals not classified between 1 and 5 (per the classification of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality[14]) that had more than 50 beds installed.

The study variables were collected using an *ad hoc* questionnaire that consisted of 112 questions (Appendix 1 in the supplementary material). The IMUs were classified according to their hospital's size: type 1 for $\leq$200 beds; type 2 for 200–499 beds; type 3 for 500–1000 beds; and type 4 for >1000 beds. The survey was conducted between September 2014 and May 2015. Once the data collection was complete, the head of the IMU was asked to confirm any apparently