



PERSPECTIVES IN CARDIOLOGY

For the improvement of Heart Failure treatment in Portugal - Consensus statement[☆]



Position Paper endorsed by the Heart Failure Working Group of the Portuguese Society of Cardiology, the Heart Failure Nucleus of the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine, the College of General Practitioners of the Portuguese Medical Council, the Cardiovascular Disease Nucleus of the Portuguese Association of General Practitioners, and the Nursing Nucleus of the Portuguese Society of Cardiology

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Abstract Heart failure is a syndrome with high prevalence, morbidity and mortality, but awareness of the disease is poor among the general public and policy makers. This document, which was prepared by a group of experts consisting of cardiologists, internists and general practitioners, aims to set out in detail the problem of heart failure in Portugal at several levels: burden of the disease, diagnosis, treatment and monitoring. To this end, different aspects of the management of the various stages of the disease are identified and discussed in detail, covering both outpatients and hospitalized patients. In order to optimize the medical care

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Integrated multidisciplinary treatment;
Socioeconomic impact

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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Documento de consensos;
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Impacto socioeconómico

provided to these patients, various short-, medium- and long-term solutions and strategies are put forward that have the potential to improve the integration and use of available resources. The intention is to highlight strategies that are not based on a single model but can be adapted to different regional circumstances, in order to increase awareness and improve management of heart failure in Portugal.

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Pela melhoria do tratamento da insuficiência cardíaca em Portugal – documento de consenso

Resumo A insuficiência cardíaca é uma síndrome com elevada prevalência, morbilidade e mortalidade, sendo, no entanto, pouco reconhecida junto dos cidadãos e decisores políticos. O presente documento foi elaborado por um conjunto de peritos constituído por médicos especialistas em cardiologia, medicina interna e medicina geral e familiar, e pretende expor detalhadamente o problema da insuficiência cardíaca em Portugal a vários níveis: peso da síndrome, diagnóstico, tratamento e acompanhamento dos doentes. Para tal, são identificados e discutidos em detalhe os diferentes aspetos inerentes ao manejo da síndrome durante o processo assistencial, nas várias fases da doença e que incluem doentes hospitalizados e em ambulatório. De modo a otimizar a assistência médica prestada a estes doentes, são apontadas diversas soluções e estratégias a curto, médio e longo prazo com potencial para melhorarem a articulação e utilização dos recursos disponíveis. Pretendeu-se desta forma destacar estratégias que, não se traduzindo num modelo único de melhoria, poderão ser adaptadas às diferentes especificidades regionais, de modo a aumentar o reconhecimento e a atenção prestada à insuficiência cardíaca em Portugal.

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Introduction: the problem of heart failure

Heart failure (HF) is a syndrome with high prevalence, morbidity and mortality that represents a considerable economic and social burden. However, in Portugal awareness of the disease is poor among the general public and policy makers. In addition, there has been a lack of concerted efforts in the medical profession to organize the health care process more efficiently, which is essential to improve management of the syndrome and thus to have a positive effect on health indicators. In view of the current and future importance of HF – which is expected to increase in prevalence and incidence – it must be seen as a priority in health care in Portugal, and the National Health Service (NHS) should be given the necessary means to improve its performance in clinical terms as well as in its organizational and funding framework.

The present document aims to raise awareness of the urgent need to prioritize HF in the health agenda given its current prevalence and the increase expected in the near future, the associated high mortality and morbidity and the socioeconomic burden for patients, their families, and society. It also aims to help identify the main shortcomings in the management of HF and to propose solutions at different levels of care that will lead to improved integration between the different specialists involved in the diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of HF patients at the national level.

This analysis is intended for physicians, particularly those involved in the management of HF patients (cardiologists, internists, intensivists and general practitioners [GPs]), nurses, and health decision-makers, whose determinations may influence attitudes to HF. It is also intended to act as a guide for future initiatives aimed at raising awareness among the general public.

The authors of the present document, who are cardiologists, internists and GPs, work within the NHS, in hospitals (including emergency departments) and in primary health care. The opinions expressed here are based on their personal experience, both clinical and organizational, and are supported by the guidelines published by the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association (ACA/AHA). This consensus statement is endorsed by the main medical societies and associations involved in the treatment of HF (Appendix 1).

Heart failure in the world and in Portugal: the burden of the syndrome

HF is defined as a syndrome caused by a structural and/or functional cardiac abnormality, resulting in inadequate cardiac output for the metabolic needs of the organism at rest or during exercise.¹ In most cases it is the final stage of

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