



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Dementia drug consumption in the Basque Country between 2006 and 2011[☆]



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KEYWORDS

Alzheimer disease;
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Abstract

Objective: We evaluated the consumption of specific medications for treating cognitive symptoms associated with AD and other types of dementia in individuals over 60 years of age between 2006 and 2011 in the Basque Country.

Methods: A retrospective descriptive study was conducted. The pharmacy division of the Basque Government Department of Health provided the prescribing data for the following drugs: donepezil, rivastigmine, galantamine, and memantine. The number of defined daily doses (DDDs) and the number of DDDs per 1000 inhabitants per day (DHD) were calculated.

Results: Consumption increased by 49.72% between 2006 and 2011. There were marked differences between drugs (13.02% donepezil; 93.18% rivastigmine; 37.79% galantamine; 70.40% memantine) and Basque provinces (16.34% in Álava; 50.49% in Bizkaia; 57.37% in Gipuzkoa). Likewise, expenditure increased from €11.5 million in 2006 to €18.1 million in 2011.

Conclusions: This study shows increased consumption of these drugs, although there are also marked differences by province which may be due to differences in prescribing habits. Spending for these drugs rose parallel to this increase in consumption; drug prices remained stable throughout the study period.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Enfermedad de Alzheimer;
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Inhibidores de la colinesterasa;
Memantina

Consumo de medicamentos para el tratamiento de la demencia en la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca durante el periodo 2006-2011

Resumen

Objetivo: Este estudio evalúa el consumo de medicamentos para el tratamiento cognitivo de la EA y otras demencias en personas mayores de 60 años entre los años 2006 y 2011 en el País Vasco.

Métodos: Se realizó un estudio descriptivo retrospectivo. La Dirección de Farmacia del Departamento de Salud del Gobierno Vasco facilitó los datos de prescripción de donepezilo, rivastigmina, galantamina y memantina. Se obtuvieron el número de dosis diarias definidas (DDD) y el número de DDD por 1.000 habitantes/día (DHD).

Resultados: El consumo se incrementó un 49,72% durante el periodo 2006-2011, aumento que varió en función del medicamento (donepezilo 13,02%; rivastigmina 93,18%; galantamina 37,79%; memantina 70,40%) y del TTHH (Álava 16,34%; Bizkaia 50,49%; Gipuzkoa 57,37%). El gasto aumentó de 11,5 millones de euros en 2006 a 18,1 millones en 2011.

Conclusiones: Se observó un aumento en el consumo aunque existen diferencias entre TTHH que pueden deberse a hábitos de prescripción diferentes. El gasto farmacéutico se incrementó paralelamente al aumento en el consumo, ya que el precio de los medicamentos permaneció estable en ese periodo.

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Introduction

Alzheimer disease (AD), a progressive and irreversible condition, is the most common type of dementia and affects 60% to 80% of all dementia patients. According to numerous clinical and epidemiological studies, AD is a very common disease and its incidence is increasing mainly due to population ageing.^{1,2} In a recent review article conducted within the framework of ALCOVE (ALzheimer COoperative Valuation in Europe), the prevalence of dementia is estimated at 7.23% for the European population older than 65.² However, a Spanish study conducted in the Basque Country reported a prevalence of 9.1% in the same age group.³ Dementia is therefore estimated to affect between 30 000 and 38 000 people in the Basque Country.

Although no curative or preventive treatments for AD are currently available, certain drugs can slow disease progression and manage the associated symptoms. Most patients with AD are treated with combination therapy, including specific drugs for cognitive symptoms (neuroleptics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, etc.). For the purposes of this study, however, we only included specific drugs for treating cognitive impairment associated with dementia provided that clinical practice guidelines show consensus on their use.⁴⁻⁸ The active ingredients included in our study are donepezil, rivastigmine, and galantamine for mild to moderate AD, and memantine for moderate to severe AD.

The purpose of our study was to analyse consumption of specific medications for treating cognitive symptoms in AD and other dementias in people older than 60 between 2006 and 2011 in the Basque Country, as well as to assess the economic impact of consumption patterns.

Material and methods

We conducted a retrospective descriptive study of the consumption of medications for cognitive symptoms in patients with AD in the Basque Country between 2006 and 2011. We included pharmacological presentations classified by the WHO as ATC code 'N06D' (anti-dementia drugs), recommended by clinical practice guidelines, and approved for prescription in Spain. These drugs are further categorised in 2 groups: anticholinesterases or ACE (N06DA), comprising donepezil, rivastigmine, and galantamine; and other anti-dementia drugs (N06DX), which include memantine. Data were gathered from the Pharmacy Division of the Basque Government Department of Health, which records the number of packages dispensed by pharmacies in the Basque Country and invoiced to the Spanish Health System. Therefore, our study does not include data on prescriptions paid for by citizens or private entities such as insurance companies, or data from in-hospital drug consumption. Annual demographic data were gathered from the Statistics Institute of the Basque Country.⁹

We based drug consumption estimates on the 'defined daily dose' (DDD), the technical unit of measurement recommended by the WHO as an international standard for pharmacoepidemiological studies. The DDD is the assumed average maintenance dose per day for a drug used for its main indication in adults, and it is normally expressed in grams of the active ingredient.¹⁰ DDDs have been established based on the literature and expert consensus.¹¹ The DDD for each active ingredient was obtained from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology (Table 1).¹² Drug consumption is expressed as the number of DDDs per 1000 inhabitants per day (DDI); this unit provides an estimate

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