Oral Communication

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Lymphedema Management: A Survey of Moroccan Physicians' Knowledge

Topic: Biostatistics

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BACKGROUND

Lymphedema is a chronic condition caused by fluid accumulation due to impaired lymphatic drainage. It can be primary or secondary. Late management can cause several complications. Therefore, physicians' awareness of lymphedema diagnosis and treatment can potentially lead to its progression. The objective of this study is to identify gaps that may impact clinical practices.

METHODS

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 376 physicians in Morocco from various specialties, including PRM, dermatology, oncology and general practice.

Data was collected using a series of questions including 14 items. Descriptive statistics and comparative analyses were performed using SPSS.

RESULTS

The study included 376 physicians, with general practitioners comprising the largest group (37.5%). Other specialties represented were physical and rehabilitation medicine (PMR) (20.5%), oncology (10.6%), rheumatology (7.2%), and dermatology (5.6%). A significant proportion (42.6%) reported never having managed lymphedema. Performance on a knowledge assessment was generally low, with only 1.6% achieving a perfect score (8/8) and nearly two-thirds (63%) scoring 4/8 or lower. Analysis showed significant differences in knowledge levels among specialties (Chi2 test = 70,783, with $p < 0,001$). To assess where these differences are most significant, we conducted pairwise comparisons, starting with general practitioners with lower scores and rehabilitation specialists with higher scores. The Chi2 test has also revealed a significant association between training and knowledge score (Ki2 = 14.961, $p < 0,001$. The POST-hoc analysis of adjusted standardized residuals showed that trained physicians had significantly higher scores (residual = +3.9), while untrained physicians had significantly lower scores (residual = +3.8). These findings indicate that training can also improve knowledge about lymphedema.

Our study found also that 14.4% of physicians consider diuretics essential for lymphedema treatment. This confusion between lymphedema and other types of edema and inappropriate use may lead to adverse effects without therapeutic benefit.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals gaps in physicians' knowledge of lymphedema and highlights the importance of early diagnosis for giving a better quality of life for affected patients. Improving physician awareness by integrating training programs about lymphedema management into medical curricula can further improve patient outcomes.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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