

An audit on the practice of junior medical officers on the assessment of dementia amongst elderly patients presenting to general medical wards in a tertiary care hospital

A Arasalingam¹, T Kumanan², K Vijitha¹

¹Teaching Hospital Jaffna, Sri Lanka

²Department of Medicine, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

Objectives: This audit was aimed to assess the practice of junior doctors on the assessment of dementia amongst elderly patients presenting to general medical wards in a tertiary care hospital.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire assessing the practice of assessment of dementia amongst elderly patients was sent to the 39 junior medical officers in the general medical wards at the Teaching Hospital Jaffna. The questionnaire had 10 components. The audit was done in August 2014.

Results: Of the 39 doctors 31 (79.49%) responded. 9/31 (29%) were intern house officers, 25.8% were senior house officers. 1/31 (3.2%) screened more than 50% and 64.5% screened less than 5% of the elderly patients for dementia. 77.4% interviewed a family member regarding memory problems in less than 20% of their patients. 14/31 (45.2%) performed formal evaluation of patients with dementia during the same visit; 25.8% did not perform a formal evaluation. 27/31 (87.1%) used the MMSE. 9.7% were very comfortable and 58.1% were somewhat comfortable in making a diagnosis. 87.1% investigated for an aetiology; 64.5% with complete blood count, 77.4% TSH, 6.5% HIV, 51.6% CT Brain and 3.2% MRI. 16.1% would first discuss the diagnosis with the patient, 48.4% would discuss with patient and family member. 67.7% use the term memory loss; 22.6% use dementia to communicate to the patient.

Conclusions: Most doctors screen less than 5% of the elderly for dementia in the general medical setting. The importance of screening for dementia and correctable causes should be emphasized and the reasons for not screening should be assessed.