percutaneous renal denervation needs corroboration through a longer follow-up.

Olga Costero,4 Angel Sánchez-Recalde,4,5 Raúl Moreno,6 Isidro Moreno,7 Rafael Selgas,8 and José L. López-Sendón6

4Servicio de Nefrología, Hospital Universitario La Paz, Madrid, Spain
5Servicio de Cardiología, Hospital Universitario La Paz, Madrid, Spain
6Servicio de Anestesia Cardiaca, Hospital Universitario La Paz, Madrid, Spain

4 Corresponding author:
E-mail address: recalde@secardiologia.es (A. Sánchez-Recalde).
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Knowledge of Cardiac Disease Among Hospitalized Patients

Grado de conocimiento sobre su enfermedad cardíaca entre los pacientes hospitalizados

To the Editor,

Clinicians have a wealth of resources available to help them take existing evidence into account when making decisions. However, patients are the ones who actually have to live with the disease, so educating them should be a priority if they are to be able to adequately self-manage their condition. Clinical practice guidelines for some pathologies have made recommendations regarding patient education,1,2 but levels of patient knowledge are not all they should be. Our aim was to assess patients’ level of knowledge about their disease amongst those admitted to our unit.

We interviewed 100 randomly selected patients from those admitted to the cardiology department of our tertiary hospital in March 2012. Two cardiologists independently conducted verbal interviews using a pro-forma, closed-ended survey (Table 1). The study was blinded with regard to the physicians and nurses treating the patients interviewed. On admission, patients received information about their condition and the reason for admission. They also went through the nursing admission program and received written information on where they would be sent and details of their assigned physician (who visited and informed the patient daily), as well as receiving and completing informed consent forms. Subsequent statistical analysis was performed using SPSS/PC 17 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, United States). Continuous variables were expressed as means and confidence intervals, categorical variables as absolute numbers and percentages. Multivariate analysis was performed using binary logistic regression. Significance was set at P<0.05.

The study population’s baseline characteristics are shown in Table 2. The median time-to-interview was day 3 [interquartile range, days 2-4]. Of those interviewed, 11% did not know the reason for their admission, 19% could not say which hospital service they were in, and 17% thought they had been admitted to cardiac surgery. Furthermore, 61% did not know their physician’s name, 24% did not know what kind of heart disease they were experiencing, 32% could not provide information on the tests they had received, and 29% could not say what type of treatment they would be given. With regard to disease severity, 23% could not say how severe their disease was, 29% thought their disease was less severe than it actually was, and 22% were not sure whether the disease was relevant to their prognosis. Finally, 9% did not know

Table 1
Survey Form Used, With Possible Response Options in Brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General data</th>
<th>Hospital affiliation</th>
<th>Date of admission and date questionnaire completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-demographic data</td>
<td>Level of education (none-no high school diploma/high school diploma/baccalaureate-vocational training/university)</td>
<td>Professional sector (primary/secondary/tertiary) Social context (rural/urban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data on admission</td>
<td>Characteristics of admission (urgent/programmed)</td>
<td>Service (cardiology/cardiac surgery/don’t know) Reason for admission (arrhythmia/cheast pain/dyspnea/syncope/other/don’t know) Name of attending physician Complementary tests (list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness characteristics</td>
<td>Type (coronary/valvular/arrhythmic/pericardial/infective endocarditis/other)</td>
<td>Severity (mild/severe/very severe/don’t know) Affects prognosis (yes/no/don’t know) Treatment (medical/interventional/surgical/device implantation/don’t know) Lifestyle change on discharge (yes/no/don’t know)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Would like more information (yes/no/don’t know)</td>
<td>Format (paper/verbal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Illnesses categorized as serious were acute myocardial infarction, coronary disease, ventricular arrhythmias, heart failure, infective endocarditis, severe valve disease, and ventricular dysfunction. Conditions categorized as very serious were hemodynamic instability, acute pulmonary edema, complicated endocarditis, resuscitated cardiac arrest.

b Serious and very serious illnesses were considered to impact prognosis.
results do suggest that these patients have insufficient knowledge of their disease. Lower levels of self-care have been shown to be associated with poorer control of hypertension, but there is evidence that educational interventions can lead to improvements in knowledge about ischemic heart disease, and in quality of life and number of readmissions in heart failure, and in quality of life, morbidity, and mortality in diabetes mellitus. On the other hand, analysis suggests that information available to patients online for conditions such as aortic aneurysm is of poor quality.

Limitations of the present study include the relatively small number of patients included and that participants were from a single center. It remains to be seen whether these findings can be extrapolated to other centers. On a local level at least we have identified areas for improvement and subgroups, such as patients with lower educational levels, who could most benefit from further initiatives because this group showed the greatest lack of knowledge. As in diabetes mellitus, it is likely that the greatest benefit would come from programs tailored to patients’ age and sociocultural background.

Investigating these aspects of patient management should form part of hospital quality programs and would help address information deficits in the physician-patient relationship.

Manuel Barreiro, Elena Velasco, Alfredo Renilla, Francisco Torres, María Martín, and Jesús M. de la Hera

Área del Corazón, Hospital Central de Asturias, Oviedo, Asturias, Spain

*Corresponding author: Fernández Ladreda 34, 5. E, 33011 Oviedo, Asturias, Spain.

E-mail address: manuelbarreiroperaza@gmail.com (M. Barreiro).

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