

Abstract

Purpose: Considering the limited information available, the aim of the study was to examine the prevalence and characteristics of inpatients with dementia in Belgian general hospitals.

Methods: All admissions of inpatients aged at least 40 years with or without dementia were retrieved from the nationwide administrative hospital discharges database for the period 2010-2014.

Results: Admissions of inpatients aged 40 years or more with dementia have increased to reach 83,017 out of 1,285,593 admissions (6.46%) in general hospitals in 2014, mostly admitted through the emergency department (79.7%) and for another reason than dementia (85.9%). These patients stayed longer [19.2 days, standard deviation (sd) = 23.6, median = 13] than the average length of stay of patients of the same age (7.9 days, sd = 14.1, median = 17). Considering patients aged 75 years or more falling into the 20 most common pathology groups (of patients with dementia), the group with dementia spent 5 days more than the group without dementia. Patients admitted from home spent more time in hospital when they were discharged to a residential care facility than when they returned home (27.2 days versus 15.8 days). The in-hospital mortality was high in the first days of admission.

Conclusions: The growing prevalence of patients with dementia in inpatient setting puts a high pressure on the hospital capacity planning and geriatric expertise. Moreover, as patients with dementia should be kept outside hospitals when possible for safety and quality matters, long-term organizational investments are required inside hospital and residential care settings as well as in community care.