

Elderly persons facing polymedication : a socio-anthropological approach of their medicine uses and relationship to the provider.

Nowadays a majority of persons aged 65 and over suffer from at least three chronic conditions simultaneously and take numerous medicines over the long term. This phenomenon of polyopathy and polymedication in elderly persons is more and more preoccupying because of :

1. Iatrogeny, i.e. drug interactions which can be harmful.
2. Inobservance, i.e. medication - in this case complex to manage by patients - is not taken as prescribed, can limit its effects and be noxious.

The population concerned by polymedication is seldom studied since co-morbidities are an exclusion criterion in clinical trials

The aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing complex medication intake by focusing on the points of view of 60 elderly polymedicated persons, through interviews and filmed observations of medicine places of storage at home. With a socio-anthropological perspective, the medicine is here considered as an object with pharmacological efficacy, as well as an object invested with meaning by those who prescribe, deliver or receive it. Elderly persons will be invited to express their views on their medication, show us how they manage and take it daily, and how they interact with those assisting them. In particular, polymedication checks, and its influence on ways of consuming medicines and more or less respecting medical prescriptions, will be observed. Finally, a pharmacological and pharmaceutical analysis will allow to identify potential problems of iatrogeny, duplication and overdosage.

Thoroughly understanding determinants of medicine consumption in situations of old age and chronicity will allow professional caregivers to integrate aspects of symbolic uses of medicines influencing care, as well as to better grasp the needs of those who take a complex medication over time. In turn, it should allow to limit the iatrogeny and inobservance induced by elderly persons' polymedication.

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