Executive summary of research in progress

Delirium in nursing home residents with severe cognitive impairment

Principal investigator
Jane McCusker, MD, DrPH

Co-investigators
Nathalie Champoux, MD, MPharm
Antonio Ciampi, PhD
Martin Cole, MD
Johanne Monette, MD, MSc
Philippe Voyer, RN, PhD

Alzheimer Society

Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Community Studies/ Département d’épidémiologie clinique et d’études communautaires
St. Mary’s Hospital Center/Centre hospitalier de St-Mary
3830, Avenue Lacombe, Montréal (Québec), H3T 1M5, Canada

January 22, 2007

Principal investigator: Jane McCusker, MD, DrPH
Department of Clinical Epidemiology & Community Studies
St Mary's Hospital Center
3830 Lacombe Ave
Montreal, QC, H3T 1M5
Tel.: (514) 345-3511 Ext 5060
Fax: (514) 734-2652
jane.mccusker@mcgill.ca

Co-investigators: Nathalie Champoux, MD, MPharm
Antonio Ciampi, PhD
Martin Cole, MD
Johanne Monette, MD, MSc
Philippe Voyer, RN, PhD
Introduction

Delirium is a mental disorder characterized by acute onset and impairment of memory, cognition, thought, consciousness, and sleep. Most previous research on delirium (including the research conducted by members of our group) has been conducted in acute-care settings. This research indicates that many cases of delirium in medical inpatients had their onset in nursing homes, and many patients with persistent symptoms of delirium are discharged to nursing homes or other institutional settings.

Although dementia is a well-recognized risk factor for delirium, the risk factors, course and outcomes of delirium superimposed on dementia are not well understood. In particular, people with severe dementia have been excluded from previous research on delirium. Nursing homes are an important place to study this problem because of the relatively high prevalence of dementia.

The study design is an exploratory, observational, prospective study with repeated measurements in a sample of nursing home residents age 65 and over with severe dementia. This study is being conducted concurrently, in the same facilities, as a similar study of residents without severe dementia, funded by CIHR.

Objectives

The objectives are to describe the following, in nursing home residents aged 65 and over with severe dementia:

1) The prevalence (at enrollment) and incidence (during the 6 months after enrollment) of delirium;
2) The clinical course of delirium, before and after an acute episode;
3) Predisposing /precipitating/ perpetuating risk factors for delirium;
4) 6-month outcomes (mortality, cognitive and functional status, delirium symptoms, hospitalization and health services utilization) among subjects with and without delirium;
5) The detection of delirium by nurses;
6) The impact of delirium upon the burden of nursing care.

Methods

The study is being conducted at 7 nursing homes in Montreal and Quebec City. Eligibility criteria include: age 65 and over and the severe dementia. The sampling methods aim to produce a sample that is representative of residents with differing lengths of stay. Members of the sample are followed with repeated assessments by trained research assistants for 6 months or until death. Data collection methods include: weekly resident assessments, weekly interviews with nursing staff, chart reviews, and review of medications.

The target sample size to be enrolled is 100. The expected date for completion of data collection is December, 2007.