



## Polypharmacy in the elderly

### Polimedicación en el adulto mayor

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Dear Editor:

Scientific and technical development and the globalization of society have resulted in an increase in the number of available medicines and the need for information on their effectiveness and safety. Medicines are the most widely used medical technology in the contemporary world. <sup>(1)</sup>

Population aging is a situation facing humanity; it is associated with polypharmacy (condition defined by the World Health Organization as the use of five or more drugs simultaneously) <sup>(2)</sup> due to the multiple chronic diseases suffered by older adults.

Older adults are the population group that requires the most medication and requires the most medical attention 80 % of these patients have one or more non-communicable diseases and 36 % may suffer from more than three conditions that make it essential to use multiple medications, which leads to polypharmacy. This consumption leads to a high rate of adverse effects, drug interactions and mortality. <sup>(1)</sup>

In Spain, daily drug use ranges from two to three medications and more than 75 % consume them chronically. In Sweden, there is evidence of abuse of more than four different groups of drugs in adults over 85 years of age. In Mexico, the prevalence of polypharmacy in adults is 34 % and this percentage involves older adults. <sup>(1)</sup> In Cuba, 11 % of the elderly are on polypharmacy. <sup>(3)</sup>

The Cuban population is aging rapidly. This change in the age structure of a population has a direct impact on areas such as the economy, health and social security. <sup>(3)</sup> For this reason, the Family Doctor and Nurse Program (approved in 2023) points out as a fundamental activity the

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achievement of healthy aging from a social, functional and psychological point of view, with the participation of the family and community factors. Another activity pointed out in this document is the prevention of damage to health caused by the use of multiple medications.

It is necessary for older adults to be advised by nursing professionals on the proper use of drugs, as well as to establish a work dynamic that must be addressed from an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and intersectoral perspective to create support systems for the proper use of medications.

Mary of Charity Ayala Viamontes <sup>1</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000/0002/1462/6313>

Esther Izquierdo Machón <sup>1\*</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000/0002/7889/1814>

Rolando Alvarez Marquez <sup>2</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000/0002/1650/3521>

<sup>1</sup> “Lidia Doce” Nursing School. Havana, Cuba.

<sup>2</sup> Julio Trigo Lopez School of Medical Sciences. Havana, Cuba.

\*Correspondence. Email: [eizquierdo@infomed.sld.cu](mailto:eizquierdo@infomed.sld.cu)

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