PRIMARY CARE REFERRALS TO HOSPITAL SPECIALISTS

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BACKGROUND

1. In Spain, patients need a referral from their GPs in order to gain access to non-urgent hospital specialist visits.

2. Therefore, one the main features of our primary care is gatekeeping.

3. Our team aims for a high patient resolution, employing various technical procedures and common diagnostic tests, to avoid certain referrals or to refer patients for treatment only after they have been properly diagnosed.

4. Despite a low number of referrals, we observed large variations in referral rates among our family physicians.
METHODS (I)

- Primary care team, urban setting, 12 family physicians, 28,000 assigned citizens
- We gathered, from the electronic database, all referrals made during five months in 2013.
- We sorted out the seven most frequently referred specialties.
- The referrals to be reviewed were equally distributed, as Access files, to eleven physicians that participated in the study.
- Evaluation included reason for referral, presence patients’ medical history in the referral and reviewing doctor’ subjective agreement on referral idoneity
- Each referral was evaluated by two doctors.
METHODS (II)

- Reason for referral
  - Treatment
  - Diagnosis
  - Follow-up
  - Clerical work
  - Missing information

- Specialities
  - Traumatology
  - Dermatology
  - Ophthalmology
  - ENT
  - Urology
  - Neurology
  - Rheumatology
RESULTS (I)

• A total of 834 referrals corresponding to 13 doctors were evaluated.
• A wide variation in referrals number among doctors was noted, from 46 to 96.
• We analyzed the adequacy of referrals.
• We looked for the agreement between the two evaluators, which was reached in 621 (74.46%) cases.
• 80 (12.88%) were considerate as improper by both reviewers.
Results (II)

Referrals for each specialty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRAUMATOLOGIA</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERMATOLOGIA</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFTALMOLOGIA</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUROLOGIA</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REUMATOLOGIA</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTORRINOLARINGOLOGIA</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UROLOGIA</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

834 referrals
Results (III)

Reason for referral

- Missings information: 8.27%
- Clerical work: 3.12%
- Follow-up: 11.99%
- Diagnosis: 46.22%
- Treatment: 30.40%

834 referrals
Results (IV)

Reason for referral’s agreement

834 referrals

Specialities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speciality</th>
<th>Agree%</th>
<th>No Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traumatologia</td>
<td>57.21%</td>
<td>42.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dermatologia</td>
<td>63.59%</td>
<td>36.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oftalmologia</td>
<td>67.33%</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otorrinolaringologia</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urologia</td>
<td>60.76%</td>
<td>39.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurologia</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reumatologia</td>
<td>54.84%</td>
<td>45.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- \( \text{YES} \)
- \( \text{NO} \)
Results (V)

Decision for referral’s agreement

- 213 referrals (25.53%)
- 80 NONNO referrals (12.88%)
- 621 referrals (74.46%)

Decision for referral’s agreement on each specialty:

- Traumatologia: 72.97%
- Dermatologia: 74.27%
- Oftalmologia: 82.67%
- Otorrinolaringologia: 67.39%
- Urologia: 74.68%
- Neurologia: 72.22%
- Reumatologia: 70.97%

834 referrals
DISCUSSION

Agreement: 74.46%

Disagreement: 25.53%

Yes/Yes: 64.86%
No/No: 9.59%

Yes/No
No/Yes

Decision for referral

n=834
DISCUSSION

- Referral rates can be lowered
- We should harmonize referral criteria
- We should provide more information to the hospital specialists.
- Less agreement for ear-throat-nose referrals
Thank you!