Etiologies, comorbidities and causes of death in a population of 133 polyhandicapped patients cared for at specialist rehabilitation centres

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Objective.– This study addresses the questions of the aetiologies, comorbidities, and causes of death in a population of severely poly-handicapped (PLH) patients.

Methods.– Based on the medical files of all deceased PLH patients, who were cared for between 2006 and 2012. Data collected: etiological diagnosis of the poly-handicap, duration and type of hospitalisation, age, place and cause of death, comorbidities: chronic respiratory insufficiency, recurrent attacks of pulmonary infections, urinary infections, active epilepsy, scoliosis, chronic digestive disorders, and behavioural problems.

Results.– Hundred and thirty-three patients died, 70 children and 63 adults. The sex-ratio was 84 men to 49 women. The average stay in these institutions was 10 years. The average age at the time of death was 21 years, in 60% of cases the place of death was in the specialist rehabilitation centres. The causes of death in decreasing order were: pulmonary infections (63.2%), sudden death (18%), status epilepticus (6.8%); 79.7% of patients suffered from chronic respiratory insufficiency, 60.2% suffered from serious scoliosis, 66.9% drug-resistant epilepsy, 78.9% had digestive disorders. The main aetiologies of the poly-handicap were: pre- and perinatal encephalopathies (31.6%), metabolic encephalopathies (18%), convulsive encephalopathies (11.3%).

Conclusion.– The main comorbidity and main cause of death in patients with severe PLH is respiratory failure.

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