FUNCTIONALITY AND FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY IN A COMMUNITY-DWELLING OLDER ADULTS IN PORTUGAL

Tomás, M.T.1; Fernandes, B.1; Quirino, D.2

1Lisbon Higher School of Health Technology, Portugal; 2 Santa Maria House, AAPHM, Loures, Portugal; teresa.tomais@estrel.pt

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Portuguese population has a higher risk of functional decline and frailty. This trend, along with a growing aging index, poses a major economic and social challenge to health in ageing people. The purpose of our study was to characterize functional physical fitness in community-dwelling older adults in order to prevent functional decline and an increase in health care costs.

METHODS

Our sample consisted of 128 older adults (95 women, 33 men), aged 65-97 years, independent and living in Loures municipality, Portugal. Functional physical fitness was assessed with Senior Fitness Test Battery. Predicted distance was calculated with Troosters et al (1999) equation. Grip strength was assessed with hydraulic dynamometer Jamar® and functional capacity with the Composite Physical Function (CPF) Scale. A basic descriptive analysis was conducted (statistical package SPSS IBM for Windows, v22) and the sample was stratified by age.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Senior Fitness Test Battery and grip strength scores suggested low levels of strength, flexibility, endurance and balance, compared with other similar populations, suggesting a higher risk for sarcopenia. Distance walked by our sample remained at 73% of the estimated distance (table 2 and 3).

When stratified by age, percentage of estimated distance shows a greater decrease. On CPF, 80% of our sample presented moderate or low levels of functional capacity.

Distance walked is positively associated with handgrip and muscle mass, showing the importance of walking in this population.

This study gives a first assessment of handgrip in the Portuguese population.

CONCLUSIONS

Functional fitness of this population appears to have lower values than expected. Distance walked shows a decrement higher than expected with a probable faster ageing than the expected. Our study provides a first assessment of grip strength in an older Portuguese population showing also lower values for this component of functionality. Compared to other populations, functional capacity (CPF) is at moderate or low level. These results are important to justify an urgent intervention in order to increase functional capacity or at least contribute to a slower decrease.

REFERENCES
