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Dehydration Evaluation and Management in Older Adults

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JAMA. 1995;274(19):1552-1556. doi:10.1001/jama.1995.03530190066035

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Abstract

Objective. —To review published literature regarding dehydration in older individuals and formulate a consensus on the evaluation and treatment of this unrecognized cause of hospitalizations, morbidity, and mortality.

Data Sources and Study Selection. —The literature concerning dehydration in the elderly population from MEDLINE was reviewed from 1976 through 1995. Search terms included *dehydration, elderly, evaluation, hospitalization, and treatment*. Particular emphasis was placed on articles describing original research leading to the development of new information on the evaluation and treatment of dehydration and review articles relating to the epidemiology, detection, treatment and health outcomes of this syndrome common in the geriatric population,

including frail, institutionalized individuals.

Data Extraction. –Data contributing to a broad scientific understanding of dehydration were initially grouped according to topic areas of the physiology of normal aging, illness-associated clinical reports of dehydration in the elderly population, and diagnostic and therapeutic interventions. The authors developed a consensus based on the weight of evidence presented and the authors' experience in the field.

Conclusions. –Early diagnosis is sometimes difficult because the classical physical signs of dehydration may be absent or misleading in an older patient. Many different etiologies place the elderly at particular risk. In patients identified as being at risk for possible dehydration, an interdisciplinary care plan with regard to prevention of clinically significant dehydration is critical if maximum benefit is to result.(*JAMA*. 1995;274:1552-1556)

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