Prevalence and risk factors for the use of restraint in psychiatry: a systematic review

Fattori di prevalenza e rischio per l’uso della contenzione in psichiatria: una rassegna sistematica

MASSIMILIANO BEGHI1,2, FEDERICA PERONI3, PIERA GABOLA4, AURORA ROSSETTI1, CESARE MARIA CORNAGGIA1,3
E-mail: mbeghi@aogarbagnate.lombardia.it
1Department of Neurosciences, University of Milano-Bicocca, Monza, Italy
2Department of Mental Health, G. Salvini Hospital, Rho, Italy
3Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Zucchi Clinical Institute, Carate Brianza, Italy
4Department of Human Sciences, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milano, Italy

SUMMARY. Aim. Despite the poor evidence supporting the use of coercive procedures in psychiatry wards and their “psychological damage” on patients, the practice of restraint is still frequent (6-17%) and varies 10-20 times among centers. Methods. We searched the PubMed, Embase and PsychInfo databases for papers published between January 1 1990 and March 31 2010 using the key words “restraint”, “constraint”, “in-patient” and “psychiatry wards” and the inclusion criteria of adult samples (studies of selected samples such as a specific psychiatric diagnosis other than psychosis, adolescence or the elderly, men/women only, personality disorders and mental retardation were excluded), the English, French, Italian or German languages, and an acute setting. Results. The prevalence of the use of restraint was 3.8-20% (not different from previous data), despite the attempts to reduce the use of restraint. The variables most frequently associated with the use of coercive measures in the 49 studies included in this review were male gender, young adult age classes, foreign ethnicity, schizophrenia, involuntary admission, aggression or trying to abscond, and the presence of male staff. Conclusions. Coercive measures are still widely used in many countries (albeit to a greater or lesser extent) despite attempts to introduce alternatives (introduction of special protocols and nurses’ training courses) in some centers that should really be tested in large-scale multicentre studies in order to verify their efficacy.

KEY WORDS: coercive measures, epidemiology, predictors.

RIASSUNTO. Scopo. Nonostante non vi sia attualmente una chiara evidenza scientifica sull’utilizzo dei metodi coercitivi nei reparti di psichiatria e sul loro “danno psicologico” sui pazienti, l’utilizzo della contenzione è ancora frequente (6-17%) e presenta una variazione di 10-20 volte tra i vari centri. Metodi. Abbiamo effettuato una ricerca bibliografica nei database PubMed, Embase e PsychInfo per manoscritti pubblicati dal 1 gennaio 1990 al 31 marzo 2010 utilizzando le parole chiave “restraint”, “constraint”, “in-patient” e “psychiatry wards” e i criteri di inclusione “campione di popolazione adulta” (studi su popolazioni selezionate come una diagnosi psichiatrica specifica che non sia psicosi/disturbo psicotico, anziano o adolescente, solo maschi/solo femmine, disturbi di personalità o ritardo mentale sono stati esclusi), manoscritti in lingua italiana, inglese, francese o tedesca, e setting acuto. Risultati. La prevalenza dell’utilizzo della contenzione è del 3,8-20% (che non differisce dai dati precedenti), nonostante i tentativi di riduzione dell’utilizzo della contenzione. Le variabili risultate più frequentemente associate nei 49 studi inclusi nella rassegna sono sesso maschile, giovani adulti, etnia straniera, schizofrenia, ricovero non volontario, aggressività o tentativi di fuga e la presenza di personale maschile. Conclusioni. Le misure coercitive anche se in percentuali in alcuni casi simili, in altri differenti sono ancora molto utilizzate in numerosi paesi nonostante alcuni tentativi di trattamento alternativo all’uso di questa tecnica (attraverso l’introduzione di protocolli speciali e corsi di training dell’equipe infermieristica). Questi metodi dovrebbero essere sperimentati su larga scala e in studi multicentrici per valutarne l’efficacia.

PAROLE CHIAVE: metodi coercitivi, epidemiologia, predittori.
INTRODUCTION

The question of physical restraint has a long and contentious history among physicians working in psychiatric hospitals. At its first meeting in 1844, the new Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (now the American Psychiatric Association) made this declaration: «It is the unanimous sense of this convention that the attempt to abandon entirely the use of all means of personal restraint is not sanctioned by the true interests of the insane». On the other hand, 19th century British psychiatrists were opposed to physical restraint, although attendants were allowed to “tackle” (1). Some of the procedures used in the past have been abolished (punishments, blood-letting, lobotomies, and insulin therapy) but the act of physical restraint has remained more or less unchanged (2).

The rates, duration and methods of seclusion and restraint vary enormously. A review by Mion et al. (3) found that the incidence of the use of physical restraint in hospitals varied from 6% to 17%, and was even higher in subjects aged more than 65 years (18-20%). The Joanna Briggs Institute Best Practice (4) similarly found that restraint was used in 3.4-21% of hospitalized patients. Stewart et al. (5) have shown that 45 empirical studies carried out by psychiatric services led to an average of up to five episodes of restraint a month in wards with an average of 20 beds; the episodes lasted about 10 minutes and the restrained patients tended to be younger, male and hospitalized against their will.

The experimentation of new drugs can lead to nothing less than “pharmacological restraint”, an alternative to physical restraint based on typical and atypical antipsychotics and benzodiazepines, even though the scientific evidence concerning their efficacy is rather limited (6).

Fisher (7) sustains it is impossible to have a psychiatric treatment that does not take into account the possibility of restraining patients, but other authors, above all in Italy (8) have begun to experiment with treatments that do not foresee the use of these techniques, and obtained some encouraging results. In support of them, three recent systematic reviews of the literature (9-11) and a general consensus (12) do not show any scientific evidence concerning the higher (or lower) efficacy of restraint in comparison with other methods of treating aggressiveness because currently available comparative studies are characterized by numerous methodological defects (non-randomized trials, small patient samples); there is therefore a need to conduct randomized trials comparing restraint with alternative treatments that are less traumatic for patients. It has in fact been shown that restraint and seclusion have deleterious physical and psychological effects on both patients and staff (7,13). In particular, the experience of restraint in women who have suffered previous sexual abuse exacerbates traumatic emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety and anger (14).

A review by Huckshorn (15) underlines the fact that the use of seclusion and restraint is also dangerous in disabled subjects as it increases the risk of death and serious accidents, in addition to causing “psychological damage”. Seclusion and restraint are rarely triggered by the demographic and clinical condition of the patients, as is confirmed by two important reviews of the literature (7,16). The patients who have suffered physical restraint tend to be in their thirties, have a diagnosis of schizophrenia, a bipolar disorder or other psychotic disorders, and have often been hospitalized against their will. The most frequent reasons for the use of coercive measures are episodes of aggressiveness or the fear of episode of aggressiveness (17).

The opinions of staff and patients concerning the causes leading to restraint are generally very different (18): in this study, the majority of staff (53/81) cited reasons of safety, whereas this reason was given by only 33 of the 81 patients, and 23 cited a “lack of compliance”. Similar results were found by Outlaw and Lowery (19) and by Duxbury and Whittington (20). Aggressiveness against staff is much more frequently punished with restraint and seclusion than aggressiveness against other patients (35% vs 25%) (21).

METHODS

This review began with a search of the PubMed, Embase and PsychInfo databases for English, Italian, French or German language papers published between January 1, 1990 and December 31, 2010 using the key words “restraint” or “constraint” and “in-patient” or “psychiatry wards”.

The inclusion criteria were adult samples representative of the entire population of psychiatric in-patients and papers written in English, French, Italian or German.

The exclusion criteria were selected patient samples (a specific psychiatric diagnosis other than psychosis, adolescents or the elderly, men/women only, personality disorders and mental retardation or intellectual disability), studies of alternatives to restraint/seclusion, studies of staff/patient views and studies carried out in non-acute settings.

Studies of psychotic diagnoses were included because psychosis accounts for a large proportion of the restrained population.

We initially considered 842 studies: 338 were excluded because they did not fit the objectives of the review; 240 because they involved special populations (the elderly,
RESULTS

As underlined by Betemps (22), Needham (23), Husum (24) and Korkeila (25) in multicenter studies, the number of coercive measures (seclusions) varies widely from center to center (with the difference sometimes as much as 10 times) and they very often depend not on the type of patient but on specific methodological approaches to the subject.

If compared as a whole, similar prevalence rates have been found in the United States [8% by Hendryx (26), and 13.6% of men and 9.2% of women by Minnick (27)], Australia [9.4% by Irving (28), 12.5% by Whitehead (29), and 12% of reclusions by Roberts (30)], Germany [7% by Hübner-Liebermann (31)], and 10.4% by Martin (32), and Switzerland [6.6% by Martin (32)], whereas lower rates were found by Korkeila (25) in Finland (3.8%) and by Tavcar (33) in Slovenia (5%). Higher rates have been found by Knutzen (34) in Norway (14.1%), Kostea and Zardeka (35) in Poland (15.7%), and Porat (36) in Israel (14.2%), and higher rates in Japan [20% by Hübner-Liebermann (31) and 18% by Odawara (37)].

The demographic, clinical and social variables associated with the use of restraint are summarised in Tables 1 (38-72) and 2.

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Table 1. Use of restraint in unselected psychiatric patient samples: associated variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>No. patients</th>
<th>Study variables</th>
<th>Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander (38)</td>
<td>Case-control</td>
<td>30 patients, 30 nurses</td>
<td>Age, ethnicity, schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, behavioural disorders, substance use, patient outcomes, previous admission, ward rules, ward atmosphere, ward design, nurse/patient relationships</td>
<td>UV: Coercion related to distress confinement, acceptance dehumanisation, victimisation and humiliation, lack of clear rules and a therapeutic context for rule enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck et al. (39)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (5-year follow-up)</td>
<td>622 patients</td>
<td>Age, gender, ethnicity, schizophrenia, schizoaffective, bipolar disorders, antisocial personality, borderline personality, admission status</td>
<td>MV: Three classes (trajectories) of restraint: low- (71%), medium- (22%) and high-trajectory class (7%). High-trajectory class younger, more females, less psychotic, more borderline or antisocial personality disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjaminsen et al. Denmark (40)</td>
<td>Case-control</td>
<td>235,000 patients (violent vs non-violent psychotic patients)</td>
<td>Gender, psychosis, alcohol or drug abuse, violence, bipolar</td>
<td>UV: Correlation with violence; correlation with mania (in females), psychosis plus abuse of alcohol or drugs, psychotic disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betemps et al. (22)</td>
<td>Multicentre retrospective cohort (1-year follow-up)</td>
<td>82 medical centres</td>
<td>Geographic location, per diem cost, patient/staff ratio, university affiliation, schizophrenia</td>
<td>UV: Correlation with geographic location, schizophrenia. The 20 centres that secluded more, secluded 10 times more than the centres that secluded less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilanakis et al. (41)</td>
<td>6-month follow-up retrospective cohort</td>
<td>282 patients</td>
<td>Type of admission, gender, age, marital status, education, previous treatment history, ICD-10 diagnoses (psychotic, mood, anxiety, personality disorders)</td>
<td>11% of coercive measures (9.5% secluded, 1.8% restrained) UV: Correlation with involuntary admission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowers (42)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
<td>136 acute</td>
<td>Gender, age, ethnicity, schizophrenia, acute psychiatry wards, acute mental</td>
<td>MV: Correlation with deprivation, social fragmentation, youths, males, detention under the Mental Health Act; schizophrenia; ethnic minority categories; white British admissions inversely associated with conflict rates. For containment, correlation with white nurses, aggression, absconding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>study (6-month</td>
<td>psychiatry</td>
<td>disorders, deprivation, social fragmentation, staff demographic</td>
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<td>follow-up)</td>
<td>wards with</td>
<td>characteristics, staff group factor, violence, absconding</td>
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<td>and staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowers et al. (43)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
<td>136 acute</td>
<td>Gender, age, education, working status, psychiatric disorder, staff</td>
<td>MV: Positive correlation with seclusion room; time-out was inversely associated with seclusion room availability and associated with male staff; seclusion was associated with containment methods, associations with door locking.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>study (1-year</td>
<td>mental health</td>
<td>gender, staff age, staff education, seclusion, time-out, patient routines,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>follow-up)</td>
<td>wards</td>
<td>conflict, containment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crenshaw et al.</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>124 centers</td>
<td>Violence, containment</td>
<td>UV: Slight correlations between restraint and seclusion, and between violent patients and coercive measures</td>
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<td>(44)</td>
<td>(1-year follow-up)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demir (45)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional study</td>
<td>254 nurses</td>
<td>Age, marital status, number of children, education, working status, type of work,</td>
<td>UV: Only one-third of nurses decided on physical restraint together with physicians, and three-fourths tried alternative methods. Nurses reported physical reasons in relation to physical restraint, and also reported 9 patient deaths in chest restraints. Reduction in the frequency of caregiving was related to complications</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2-month follow-up)</td>
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<td>years worked, number of physical restraints, types of physical restraint</td>
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<tr>
<td>El-Badri Mellsop</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>539 patients</td>
<td>Gender, race, age, marital status, number of previous admissions, schizophrenia,</td>
<td>84 (16%) were secluded in 129 seclusion episodes. 2/3 of the seclusion events in the first week of admission, and 3/4 had 1 episode. UV: Male gender and ethnicity other than European or Maori related to seclusion. Seclusion was mainly associated with risk of, or actual violence toward staff, patients or property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(9-month follow-up)</td>
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<td>bipolar disorder, substance abuse, use of psychotropic medication, use of</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>seclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruch et al. (47)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>142 patients</td>
<td>Adult sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, adult physical assault</td>
<td>Restrainment related to adult sexual assault and not significantly to physical assault</td>
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<td>(2-year follow-up)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gudjonsson et al.</td>
<td>3-year follow-up</td>
<td>422 patients</td>
<td>Ethnicity, civil, criminal or informal section, trying to abscond, nurse target,</td>
<td>MV: Restraint: attempts to abscend, a nurse being a target, agitation, being in a civil section and violence. Seclusion: male gender, a nurse being the target agitation, younger age and being in a civil section.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>retrospective cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td>agitation, extent of injury, age, gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammer et al. (49)</td>
<td>Case control</td>
<td>622 patients</td>
<td>Childhood sexual and physical abuse</td>
<td>MV: No correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendryx et al. (26)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort</td>
<td>1266 patients</td>
<td>Forensic, geriatric, and psychiatric adults, disabled adults with co-occurring</td>
<td>Seclusion in 12%, restraint in 8%. UV: Significant correlation between seclusion hours and restraint hours (p&lt;0.001), and between number of seclusion and restraint episodes (p&lt;0.001)</td>
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<td>(1-year follow-up)</td>
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<td>mental illness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hübner et al. (31)</td>
<td>Multicentre prospective cohort (1-year follow-up)</td>
<td>865 patients (Germany); 50 schizophrenic patients (Japan)</td>
<td>Prevalence, subtype of schizophrenia</td>
<td>Mechanical restraints more frequent in Japan (p&lt;0.001); females 5% vs 16% (p=0.023); males 8% vs 25% (p=0.006). No association was found between schizophrenic subtype and frequency of restraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husum et al. (24)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional prospective study</td>
<td>3572 patients (1214 involuntary admissions)</td>
<td>Ward size, double or single rooms, crowding and patient turnover. Staff/patient ratio, staff age and gender, staff experience, proportion of unqualified staff, de-escalation training, staff turnover, attitudes of staff and administrators. Diagnoses (psychosis vs other diagnosis), aggression, age, gender, ethnicity, time of day, season, pharmacological treatment, psychotherapy, voluntary admission</td>
<td>0%-88% of patients were restrained/secluded (across wards) Wards in urban areas used seclusion (OR=7.65) and restraint (OR=3.58) more often. Of the 1214 involuntarily admitted patients, 424 (35%) had been secluded, 117 (10%) restrained, and 113 (9%) had received involuntary depot medication at discharge. MV: There was a positive association between the risk of being secluded and aggressiveness/overactivity, self-injury/suicide and psychosis, and a negative association between depressed mood and seclusion. There was a positive association between the risk of being restrained and aggressive/overactive and self-injury/suicidal symptoms. Patients other than Norwegians were at lower risk of being restrained (OR=0.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving et al. (28)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>256 patients</td>
<td>Epidemiology, method</td>
<td>UV: 24 (9.4%) restrained. Bedrails were the most frequent method. One-third of patients aged ≥85 years were restrained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaltiala et al. (50)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (6-month follow-up)</td>
<td>1543 patients</td>
<td>Number of episodes during a treatment period; reason for each episode, time spent in seclusion and restraint during the treatment period; voluntary admission, gender, and ICD-10 diagnoses of the secluded/restrained patients as made by the psychiatrists of the hospital (psychotic, substance use, affective disorder, anxiety, personality disorder)</td>
<td>370 seclusion episodes (77%) and 112 episodes of mechanical restraint (23%). Number of seclusion/restraint episodes: mean 3.8. Median duration of total seclusion was13 h, median duration of total restraint 9 h, 57.1% males. Violence was the most frequent reason for mechanical restraint. Agitation/disorientation: reason for seclusion/restraint when diagnoses of schizophrenia or substance use-related disorders were involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan et al. (51)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort (1-year follow-up)</td>
<td>224 patients</td>
<td>Gender, mood/affective disorder vs schizophrenia and other non-affective disorders. Time of day</td>
<td>MV: Mood-disordered patients 175% more restrained than schizophrenic patients. Patients with a single restraint: female/male ratio was 0.7 for both affective and schizophrenic patients. Repeatedly restrained subjects: female/male proportion in the mood-disordered group 1:0; in the schizophrenic group 0:63. During the night, the number of restraints sharply declined in both groups (p&lt;0.01)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keski-Valkama et al. (52)</td>
<td>(15-year follow-up) during a predetermined week in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1998 and 2004</td>
<td>Seclusion, restraint, duration of the restraint incidents, duration of seclusion, regional variation, gender, age, diagnosis (psychosis, mood disorders, mental retardation, personality disorders, substance use disorder)</td>
<td>Seclusion and restraint episodes during the study week were 263 in 1990, 242 in 1991, 217 in 1994, 161 in 1998 and 129 in 2004. The average age of the secluded/restrained patient was 39.1 years (SD 11.4) and 55.7% were male. In 64.2% of cases, the main diagnosis was psychosis, in 9.5% a substance use-related diagnosis, in 7.6% affective disorder, in 2.2% personality disorder, in 1.9% organic disorder, in 1.5% mental retardation, and in 1.2% other main diagnoses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keski-Valkama et al. (53)</td>
<td>1 year retrospective cohort</td>
<td>Age, gender, main diagnosis (mood disorders, schizophrenia, substance use-related disorders, other diagnoses), phase of hospital stay</td>
<td>UV: Substance use-related disorders and schizophrenia related to seclusion/restraint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klimitz et al. (54)</td>
<td>10 months prospective study</td>
<td>148 restraints</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Correlation in 70% of cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kautzen et al. (34)</td>
<td>2-year follow-up retrospective cohort</td>
<td>960 patients</td>
<td>Gender, age, ethnicity</td>
<td>14.1% restrained. UV: The rate was significantly higher among immigrants, especially in the younger age groups. Most commonly used methods were mechanical restraint alone for native-born patients and a combination of mechanical and pharmacological restraints for immigrants. The use of restraints decreased when patients reached 60 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korkela et al. (25)</td>
<td>6-month follow-up retrospective cohort</td>
<td>Legal status upon admission, gender, age, marital status, socio-economic status (SES), previous treatment history and ICD-10 diagnoses (organic psychiatric syndromes, substance use-related disorders, schizophrenia, mood disorders, personality disorders, other)</td>
<td>Seclusion in 6.6%, restraint in 3.8%. UV: involuntary status, previous commitments, substance use disorders. Significant difference in seclusion and restraint among centers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kostecka, Zardecka (35)</td>
<td>1-month prospective cohort</td>
<td>452 patients in 1989 and 414 patients in 1996</td>
<td>ICD-9 diagnosis (schizophrenia, mood disorders, alcohol dependence, substance disorder)</td>
<td>UV: 21.7% in 1989, 15.7% in 1996 (difference not significant). UV: in 1989, 54% met ICD-9 criteria for endogenous psychoses, mainly schizophrenia. The next most common diagnosis was alcohol dependence. In 1996 74% had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and 11% a diagnosis of alcohol dependence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin et al. (32)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
<td>6761 German schizophrenic patients vs 1976 Swiss schizophrenic patients</td>
<td>Restraint and seclusion rates</td>
<td>6.6% (Switzerland) and 10.4% (Germany) of admissions were affected by mechanical restraints, and 17.8% (Switzerland) and 7.8% (Germany) by seclusion. Restraint longer in Swiss hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migon et al. (55)</td>
<td>Randomised multicentre clinical trial (6-month follow-up)</td>
<td>301 patients</td>
<td>Gender, age, first admission to the service, provisional diagnosis on admission, severity of agitation, medication to which patient was allocated in the trial, period of day and day of week</td>
<td>UV: Use of physical restraints more frequent with more severe agitation and when agitation attributed to substance abuse, dementia, learning disability and organic disorders; younger age (34.8 ± 11.1 vs 39.1 ± 12.2 years), Arrival in morning and people with substance abuse. MV: No correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnick et al. (27)</td>
<td>Descriptive study (2003-2005)</td>
<td>74 psychiatric units</td>
<td>Gender, age</td>
<td>UV: In almost every type of unit being male was associated with a greater likelihood of being restrained. At least one reason for restraint was “manage behaviour” in 13.6% of men vs 9.1% of women in adult units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odawara et al. (37)</td>
<td>4-year follow-up prospective cohort</td>
<td>1334 patients</td>
<td>Gender, age, length of stay, previous treatments, diagnosis (mood disorders, schizophrenia, substance abuse, delusion disorder, organic disorder), history of suicide attempt, aggressiveness, type of admission</td>
<td>18% restrained. UV: Association with older age, male gender, involuntary admission, no previous treatment, history of suicide attempt, unconsciousness, aggressiveness, organic cerebral illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaliagkas et al. (56)</td>
<td>1-year retrospective cohort</td>
<td>342 patients</td>
<td>Gender, age, psychosis mood disorder, personality disorder, history of psychiatric disorder, reason</td>
<td>UV: Male gender, psychotic disorder, absconding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porat et al. (36)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort (1-month follow-up)</td>
<td>1419 patients</td>
<td>Reason, gender, age, psychosis, country of origin, marital status, religion, number of previous admissions, acute settings</td>
<td>14.2% underwent restraint: most frequent reasons were behaviour, violence, and aggression of the patient towards others or himself. UV: The subpopulation of restrained patients was mainly male, born in Israel, unmarried, Jewish, aged 20-49, diagnosed as psychotic, and held in an ‘acute’ ward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price et al. (57)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (7.5-year study period)</td>
<td>806 forensic patients</td>
<td>Race, aggression and restraint</td>
<td>UV: Racial groups did not differ significantly from each other in terms of the number of violent incidents or the number of episodes of restraint. However, Asians and blacks were more likely to have been secluded than other racial groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raboch et al. (58)</td>
<td>Case-control</td>
<td>770 coerced vs 1260 non-coerced patients</td>
<td>Gender, age, employment status, housing status, previous hospitalisation, schizophrenia, mood disorder, other disorder, country, reason</td>
<td>Coercive measures used in 38% of patients (varying from 21% to 59% depending on country). The most frequent reason was patient aggression against others. The most frequent measure was forced medication. In 8 countries, and mechanical restraint in 2 countries. Seclusion rarely used and reported in only six countries. UV: A diagnosis of schizophrenia and more severe symptoms were associated with a higher probability of undergoing coercive measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray et al. (59)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort (1-month follow-up)</td>
<td>125 psychiatric settings</td>
<td>Percentage of patients restrained, percentage of patients secluded, rate of seclusion orders, and rate of restraint orders</td>
<td>MV: Use of restraint was not related to use of seclusion. Only 12 of the 112 tested relationships between facility/patient characteristics and variations in the restraint and seclusion measures were significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandhu et al. (60)</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>189 physicians</td>
<td>Physicians’ characteristics (age, gender, years as physician, country of medical school, medical school education concerning physical/chemical restraint, specialty, primary practice setting, current level, previous experience of ordering physical restraint)</td>
<td>MV: Higher appraisal of harm (p&lt;0.001), less knowledge of restraint (p=0.05), and male sex (p=0.005) were the only indicators of the likelihood of ordering restraint. Psychiatry (p=0.03) or internal medicine physicians (p=0.05) were less likely to order restraint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Prevalence and risk factors for the use of restraint in psychiatry: a systematic review

Table 1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>No. patients</th>
<th>Study variables</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sangiorgio, Scarlatto (61)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort</td>
<td>22 psychiatric units</td>
<td>Written protocol, medical records, restraint register, specific training, quality of environment, number of officials, average period of stay, number of nurses per shift, number of doctors, number of psychologists, acknowledged leadership, working group, crisis at home, crisis in emergency unit, Catchment area, number of outpatient related to inpatient, involuntary admission, number of psychiatric admissions in emergency units</td>
<td>MV: The individual regression coefficients (and the significance tests applied to them) showed that the duration of restraint is affected by the working group ($p = 0.03$), the number of psychologists ($p = 0.04$), and the number of beds ($p = 0.03$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpson et al. (62)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort</td>
<td>181 pts before and 171 after use of i.m. olanzapine</td>
<td>Use of i.m. olanzapine upon admission</td>
<td>UV: No differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith (63)</td>
<td></td>
<td>48 episodes of restraint</td>
<td>Gender, age, purpose, diagnosis</td>
<td>UV: The patients involved in the 48 episodes of physical restraint were predominantly schizophrenic (60%), male (67%), and had been restrained because of physical violence to others (44%) or because they were attempting to abscond (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott (64)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (3-year follow-up)</td>
<td>234 incident forms</td>
<td>Purpose of restraint</td>
<td>55 restraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There was no evidence to suggest that having a higher than average number of staff involved in the restraint or the avoidance of female staff in limb management had a detrimental effect on effectiveness or safety of the restraint. Breakaway was used in 13% of attacks on staff and, in 70% of these, the intended purpose of the breakaway was achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinert, Gebhardt (65)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>193 patients</td>
<td>Aggression, severe psychopathology</td>
<td>UV: Correlation with aggression and severe psychopathology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steinert et al. (66)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort</td>
<td>117 patients with schizophrenia</td>
<td>Purpose for restraint, aggression, life-threatening psychiatric event</td>
<td>24 men (42.9%) and 18 women (29%) had experienced seclusion or restraint in their psychiatric history. MV: Seclusion or restraint during the current admission was best predicted by physically aggressive behaviour (OR, 11.5), and hostility at admission (OR, 23.6). Seclusion or restraint in the psychiatric history was mainly associated with lifetime exposure to life-threatening traumatic events (OR, 7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swett (67)</td>
<td>1-year prospective cohort</td>
<td>370 patients</td>
<td>Borderline personality, age, irritability</td>
<td>31% restrained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation with borderline personality, younger age, irritability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavcar et al. (33)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (2-month follow-up)</td>
<td>312 patients</td>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>5% restrained. Better clinical global impairment scores for bed belt restraint vs net beds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>No. patients</th>
<th>Study variables</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunde-Ayinmode, Little (68)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (1-year follow-up)</td>
<td>450 admissions</td>
<td>Gender, age, education, housing status, schizophrenia, depression, adjustment disorder, involuntary admission, duration, rate of medication per day, previous admission, medication at admission, legal status</td>
<td>31% of patients admitted were secluded. UV: Secluded patients were more likely to be young, and admitted involuntarily with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The most common indicator of seclusion was risk to others (74%) followed by risk to self (61%) and risk of absconding (55%). Seclusion was more likely to occur in the evenings, when staff/patient ratios were lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unruh et al. (69)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (1-year follow-up)</td>
<td>Nurse absenteeism, high patient load</td>
<td>UV: Neither a high rate of Registered Nurse absenteeism nor a high patient load separately correlated with use of restraint. However, a high rate of absenteeism was related to restraint use when the patient load was high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsten et al. (70)</td>
<td>Prospective cohort (3-week follow-up)</td>
<td>233 patients</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>MV: No correlation between coercion and outcome UV: No correlation between coercion and outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way, Banks (71)</td>
<td>Case-control</td>
<td>657 restrained vs 229/39 not restrained</td>
<td>Age, gender, length of stay, type of admission, mental retardation, psychosis, mood, anxiety and personality disorder</td>
<td>UV: Younger age, long stay, involuntary admission, female gender, a diagnosis of mental retardation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehead (29)</td>
<td>Case-control</td>
<td>408 patients</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>UV: Older age related to restraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynn (72)</td>
<td>Retrospective cohort (4.5-year follow-up)</td>
<td>235 patients restrained, pharma-cologically restrained or secluded (1269 episodes)</td>
<td>Gender, age, organic psychotic disorders, non-organic psychotic disorders, and non-psychotic disorders</td>
<td>UV: Physical restraint was preferred more often in the case of male, younger, and non-psychotic patients. Pharmacological restraint was preferred more often in the case of female patients and older patients with a non-organic psychotic disorder. Seclusion was preferred more often in the case of older male patients with an organic psychotic disorder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UV: univariate analysis; MV: multivariate analysis; OR: odds ratio; SD: standard deviation

### Table 2. Summary of investigated variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MV (studied)</th>
<th>MV (positive)</th>
<th>UV (studied)</th>
<th>UV (positive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 young</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6 young, 2 old, 1 medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 male, 1 female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6 male, 1 female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 positive, 1 negative for minority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 positive, 1 negative for minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic disorder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 positive, 1 negative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9 positive, 1 negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the studied demographic variables seems to be a very robust predictor of restraint. However, in the light of the findings, restrained patients tend to be more frequently male (a statistically significant variable in 4 of the 8 multivariate, and 6 of the 16 univariate analyses), young adults (statistically significant in 3 of the 7 multivariate, and 6 of the 18 univariate analyses), and non-autochthonous (statistically significant in 1 of the 4 multivariate, and 3 of the 5 univariate analyses).

In terms of diagnosis, patients with schizophrenia are more likely to be restrained than those with anxiety, personality or mood disorders, or disorder due to alcohol or substance abuse (statistically significant in 4 of the 5 multivariate, and 9 of the 17 univariate analyses).

In the majority of cases, the reason for restraint was aggressiveness against others (statistically significant in all of the 5 multivariate, and 8 of the 12 univariate analyses) or an attempt to abscond (statistically significant in 2 of the 3 multivariate, and both of the univariate analyses). Episodes of restraint are more frequent among patients hospitalized against their will (statistically significant in 2 of the 3 multivariate, and 3 of the 4 univariate analyses).

Male nurses have a greater propensity to use restraint that female nurses (statistically significant in 2 out of 3 multivariate analyses).

**DISCUSSION**

On the basis of the findings described in this review, restraint is still widely used in psychiatry wards (3.8-20%) even though its efficacy has not been demonstrated, and our data are in line with those of other reviews by Mion (3) (6-17%) and the Johanna Brings Institute (4) (3.4-21%). This means that the attempts to reduce the use of restraint by means of the introduction of special protocols, nurses’ training courses, etc.,
are limited to local level and have not been extended nationally: for example, there are still no nationally recognised protocols concerning the use of coercive measures in Italy (73).

Particularly in the United States, numerous attempts have been made over the last ten years to implement projects aimed at reducing the number of episodes of physical restraint in a bid to find new ways of dealing with violence (especially violence in psychiatry wards), all of which require a multi-professional approach.

On the basis of scientific evidence, some authors (74,75) say that suitable training for nursing staff, an assessment of the risk of aggressiveness, and adequate alternative resources are essential factors for reducing the number of seclusions and episodes of physical restraint. The results of these studies seem to be very encouraging in terms of the actual medium/long-term reduction and in terms of the fact that the introduction of “softer” strategies did not increase the number of episodes of aggressiveness and violence. Comparison of studies carried out in different countries indicates that coercive measures are used in 100% of the wards in Germany, 60% of those in Switzerland, and in none of the wards in Great Britain, where physical restraint is applied only along with pharmachological restraint and for a very short period of time (mean 12 minutes) (76).

Calculations of the incidence of the use of physical restraint measures vary widely from study to study. The high prevalence in Japan may be explained by its relatively recent use of outpatient clinics (about 10 years) or the recent introduction of atypical neuroleptics but, in any case, merits further study as the published figures are based on relatively small patient populations (31,37).

In terms of age, our findings differ from those of Mion (3), who found a greater prevalence of the use of restraints among elderly subjects. However, it must be remembered that we only considered psychiatry wards and it is obvious that, in the case of general medicine and geriatrics, restraints are used not only following episodes of aggressiveness against others, but also in order to prevent falls or to deal with consciousness impairment, which are very frequent in the elderly.

Concerning the other risk factors, it is interesting to note that restraining measures are used more frequently in the case of immigrants, as was also found in the interesting study by Price et al. (57) in which the incidence of seclusion proved be statistically higher among Asians and blacks than among whites, even though there was no race-related difference in the episodes of aggressiveness against others. This suggests that the actions of someone who is little known are more frightening and, therefore, the consequent reaction “must” be more drastic. Difficult communications is another factor that can induce staff to be more interventional.

Another interesting finding of this review is that a male staff is more likely to use restraint that a female staff. As we found in a previous study (77), aggressiveness tends to be directed against people of the same gender and, given that more male patients are restrained, this is more likely to be done by male staff.

Aggressiveness against others is robustly associated with the use of restraint, but this partially conflicts with the demographic variable described by us in a previous review (77), which did not find any clear prevalence of male gender, although there was a correlation with a young age. In both cases, the presence of schizophrenia was found to increase the risk of aggressiveness and restraint, but this seems to be more robust in relation to restraint, which may mean that an episode of aggressiveness involving a patient with a psychotic disorder is more alarming for the healthcare team. However, this clearly conflicts with Binswanger’s phenomenological theory (78) that “psychosis is essentially a different way of being in the world” without the degree of lucidity that may be encountered in patients with personality or mood disorders.

Both reviews also found that involuntary hospitalization is associated with a higher risk of episodes of aggressiveness or coercive measures. By definition, patients admitted against their will do not accept the admission, and consequently tend to be more hostile towards their “jailers”; furthermore, involuntary admission seems to make staff more predisposed to adopt a more negative view of the patient than in the case of those who agree to be admitted.

In conclusion, the results of our review show that coercive measures are still widely used in many countries (albeit to a greater or lesser extent) despite attempts to introduce alternatives in some centres that should really be tested in large-scale multicentre studies in order to verify their efficacy. To prevent the risks associated with the use of restraint in psychiatry, it is necessary to intervene on the staff by means of training courses designed to encourage the use of different ways of managing aggressive patients. Finally, our findings suggest the importance of studying the use of restraint in greater detail by extending the investigation to other wards (geriatric, general medicine, etc.), involving larger numbers of patients, and bearing in mind the demographic and clinical variables that seem to be most significant.
Prevalence and risk factors for the use of restraint in psychiatry: a systematic review

REFERENCES

Beghi M et al.


