Incidence of Dementia in the Maracaibo Aging Study

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Background
Latin America (LA) is undergoing an expanding demographic transition, with more than 82 million of subjects over 55 years of age for 2010. In most countries of Latin America, rates of prevalent dementia have been reported to be higher than those in developed countries. However, longitudinal studies in the region are scarce. The objective of this study was to measure age- and sex-specific incidence rates of dementia, Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and vascular dementia (VaD) for persons aged 55 years and older residing in Maracaibo Venezuela, during 1998 to 2009.

Methods
The prevalence wave of the Maracaibo Aging Study, a population-based study of community-dwelling individuals aged 55 years and older was conducted between September 1998 and March 2001. Diagnoses of dementia were made by clinical consensus following the diagnostic strategy developed for the Washington Heights Inwood Columbia Aging Project in New York. Out of 2,453 subjects of the original sample, 198 were diagnosed as demented (prevalent). The remaining 2,254 subjects formed the incidence study sample and were re-examined at least once from 2001 to 2009, the average number of years of follow-up for all was 3.6 y ± 3. Incident cases were diagnosed using the same procedures and criteria from baseline.

Results
A total of 73 incident cases of dementia were identified; 41 of them (56.2\%) had AD; 26 (35.6\%) had VaD. The annual incidence rate for dementia (per 1000 person-years [py] of follow-up) of all causes was 9.10 (8,026 py of follow up); for AD 5.18 (7,916 py of follow up); and for VaD is 3.35 (7,757 py of follow up). For all dementia, AD and VaD, incidence rates increased steeply with age, and there were no consistent differences between men and women.
Conclusions
Incidence of dementia in the population of the Maracaibo Aging Study is much higher than any other incidence rates of dementia in developing countries and many developed countries. Incidence was higher for AD than for any other dementia. The high incidence of VaD offers important opportunity for prevention. Sustained and stronger efforts are needed to prevent and provide care for victims of dementia.