The significant enhance in the elderly population has contributed to the increase in drug use, making necessary a re-evaluation in the health status of this population. The large number of prescription drugs, as well as the understanding of the prescription may be factors associated with noncompliance and with the worsening health of the elderly. The medical prescription guides drug utilization and, hence, should contain as much information as possible to avoid doubts at the time of medication administration. Therefore, there is need for very clear and detailed instructions on drugs use, to provide a more effective pharmacotherapy for the elderly. It is also needed to improve the relationship between the prescription and the professional advice in the correct use of drug therapy in order to help to increase the quality of life of individuals in this age group. In this context, it is essential to study the understanding of the prescription so to obtain a maximum utilization of pharmacological treatment. We performed an interdisciplinary research involving the areas of Pharmacology and Philosophy. This study aimed to evaluate the use of drugs and to correlate with the understanding of the prescription by the elderly. To confirm our hypothesis we performed an observational, cross-sectional study which evaluated records of the elderly outpatients of the Institute of Geriatrics and Gerontology (IGG). Preliminary results revealed that the lack of understanding may be related to the progression of age of the population. The prescription understanding of the patients attending the hospital ambulatory was higher when compared to the elderly who attended a health center in the periphery (p <0.05). Therefore, it is necessary to follow up elderly drugs use and their understanding in order to improve the effectiveness of the pharmacotherapy in this population. Furthermore, we believe that the value of understanding depends on capturing more of the internal relations between the drugs, their rational use and the their effects.

KEYWORDS: elderly; understanding; drug prescription.