Anxiety and Depression Rates In Patients With Hematological Malignancies Among Patients In Southern India

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Objective

- Patients in India often find it taboo to report mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety.
- The authors set out with the aim to check for the prevalence of anxiety and depression in patients with hematological malignancies to see how underreported it is.

Background

- Patients suffering malignancy have a very high prevalence of anxiety and depression, and it has been shown that depression is linked to medical non-compliance and longer hospitalization periods
- Patients suffering from hematological malignancies often must undergo long term chemotherapy with multiple hospitalizations
- There have been studies that show that phycological interventions could possibly improve the physical and mental health of patients suffering form cancer.

Methods

- The authors conducted a cross-sectional study of 358 patients who were currently undergoing treatment for various hematological malignancies with the goal of detecting anxiety or depression in a hospital in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- An equal distribution of male and females were chosen with an age greater than 18, and patients were equally distributed between urban and rural areas.
- Patients who had previously been diagnosed with depression or anxiety were excluded.
- Patients were assessed for depression with the patient health questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) and anxiety with the general anxiety disorder assessment 7 (GAD-7).
- The patients were interviewed face to face without the presence of their other family members in order to prevent skewing of results.

Results

- Of the 358 patients the median age was 42 [23-76].
- Among those who were surveyed with the PHQ-9 scale, there were 112 (31.2%) patients who had a score greater than 4. 11 (9.8%) patients had a score greater than 20, indicating severe depression.
- Of the 11 patients, 1 patient admitted they were actively suicidal and was ashamed to tell her family.
- 43 (38.3%) patients had a score between 15-19, 47 (41.9%) patients had a score between 10-14, and 11 (9.8%) patients had a score between 5-9.
- 198 (55.3%) patients scored greater than 10 after being surveyed with the GAD-7, indicating that further intervention was required.
- There were 79 (22%) patients who had an overlap of PHQ-9 greater than 4 and a GAD-7 greater than 10.

Summary

- High levels of depression and anxiety were found in patients who were surveyed by PHQ-9 and GAD-7 suffering from hematological malignancies indicating the need for further intervention by medical professionals.

Conclusion

- According to our data, there seems to be a large number of patients who do not report their mental health symptoms.
- We urge health care providers in India, and worldwide to screen for depression and anxiety, as early intervention with counseling and medications may promote better health for patients suffering from hematological malignancies.

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