Depression in Cancer patients of Punjab

HASSAN MUNEER¹, FATIMA ALTAF², WAQAR ANWAR³

ABSTRACT

Background: A depressed patient may less likely to perceive cancer therapy or medication to continue his good health habits. This might typically be due to less motivation or muscular fatigues among cancer patients. Main goal to conduct this study was to find depression among Pakistani/local population.

Methodology: cross sectional was conducted on 100 cancer patients were selected for duration of one year January 2016 to December 2016. The exclusion criteria include all the patients with previous or past psychological history and comorbidities whereas all the patients who had scheduled for, chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy alone or with a combination therapy to control the stomach, breast, esophagus, lung or thyroid cancer were included.

Results: One hundred cancer patients were included with the mean age of 43.6±12.7 years. There were 58 (58%) females & 42 (42%) males. The depression during the therapy or treatment was observed in 22% cases who had symptomatic depression during surgery, 80% during chemotherapy, and 30% in combine therapy whereas 28% mild depression during surgery 20% in chemotherapy and 28% in combination therapy.

Conclusion: It is concluded that the frequency of depression is high in cancer patients and among them, breast & stomach cancer patients had highest prevalence of depression.

Key words: Breast Cancer, Depression & anxiety, Familial system, Hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS)

INTRODUCTION

Among cancer patient’s depression and anxiety is the most common. The triggering factor behind may be the higher stress level, although cancer is the most stressful in patient’s experience. The above stated conditions may also have an effect on the treatment strategy and type. A depressed patient may less likely to perceive cancer therapy or medication to continue his good health habits. This may be typically due to less motivation or muscular fatigues. In our familial system, patients may withdraw from family and other social support. This may cause less emotional or financial support to cure the cancer, which is in actual, produce or devolve highly stressed and depression in patients¹². For a good cancer care it is highly recommended to go for routine screening for distress. For this Hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS) is mostly used to screen the depression in clinical settings. This tool was firstly developed and used by Zigmond and Snaith in year 1983. This tool is easy and reliable to assess the depression among patients³. The goal to conduct this study is to find pattern of depression among Pakistani/local population.

MATERIAL & METHODS

Cross sectional was used to conduct the study. One hundred cancer patients were included through simple random sampling from OPD of Mayo hospital Lahore. Study was conducted for one year from January 2016 to December 2016. The patients who had scheduled for, chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy alone or with a combination therapy to control the stomach, breast, esophagus, lung or thyroid cancer were included. Exclusion criteria include all the patients with previous or past psychological history and comorbidities. The informed consent was taken from all the participants. Demographic details and diagnosis were noted through questionnaire. HADS was used to assess anxiety & depression level. One of its part consisting 7 questions is specifically for depression. Based on the scores the anxiety and depression were categorized from normal to mild and symptomatic. An oncologist and the medical laboratory staff did all the clinical examination. All the data was analyzed by using SPSS v 20. Mean±SD was calculated for quantitative variables. Frequency and percentage were calculated for qualitative variables.

RESULTS

One hundred cancer patients were included with the mean age of 43.6±12.7 years. There were 58(58%) females and 42 (42%) males. Among all, 80% were...
married, 15% were single whereas only 5% were divorced. Fifty six percent of the patients can read and write where as 44% were illiterate. The socioeconomic status of the majority of patients is with middle-income level i.e., 60% and 30% to low and only 10% to high level. 90(90%) of the patients were schedule for surgery and others for chemotherapy or combined therapy. While examining the depression in family history, 95 (95%) of the patients were lacked with depression history. The detailed summary of depression among various cancer patients was given in table 1.

Table 1: Depression distribution among various cancer patients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cancer type</th>
<th>Mild depression</th>
<th>Symptomatic depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esophagus</td>
<td>4(9%)</td>
<td>1(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td>12(26%)</td>
<td>7(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>20(43%)</td>
<td>8(38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorectal</td>
<td>5(11%)</td>
<td>2(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyroid</td>
<td>3(7%)</td>
<td>1(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>2(4%)</td>
<td>2(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46(46%)</td>
<td>21(21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also observed the depression during the therapy or treatment, 22% of the patients have symptomatic depression during surgery, 80% during chemotherapy, and 30% in combine therapy whereas 28% mild depression during surgery 20% in chemotherapy and 28% in combination therapy.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to determine the depression levels among Pakistani cancer patients. We observed in our study almost 70% of the patients were with depression before any treatment. We report high number of patients with symptomatic depression of breast and stomach cancer, whereas higher number was also observed for mild depression in patients with breast, stomach and esophageal cancer. Hence the depression prevalence is more in breast and stomach cancer. Similar results were published in various scientific studies4-17.

The high frequency in breast cancer may be a justification of self-image, body image, and influence on mastectomy and effect on sex vitality in this group of patients. Other depression high frequent cancer, which is stomach cancer, may be due to disease relatedness or treatment effect on patient’s appearance. The causes for depression in these patients may also be weight loss, fatigues and surgical consequences18.

We have observed significant association of depression with type of treatment. We reported high frequency of depression in patients with chemotherapy as singly treatment. This may be due to the poor prognosis position or end stage of the patients that cause chemotherapy the only available option at the point. In previous studies the age acts as a variant factor for different depression and psychological responses6-14. In our study we observed older age with higher depression. Usually the disease duration increases in older age, also high cancer metastasis and high disability and these conditions yield high depression and anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS

We may conclude that the frequency of depression was high among cancer patients and out of them frequency was highest in breast & stomach cancer patients and after the diagnosis of clinically important psychological disorders, proper treatment interventions must be performed to improve the quality of life in these patients.

REFERENCES


