

Mental status of hypertensive patients attending medical clinics in the National Hospital of Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Growing evidence suggests high levels of co-morbidity between hypertension and mental health. However, there are no studies conducted to describe the mental health of hypertensive patients in the Sri Lankan setting. An insight into factors which contribute to the mental status of hypertensive patients will open new avenues for better and more cost effective management of hypertension.

Objectives

To describe the mental status of hypertensive patients who attend the medical clinics of the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), and practices they adopt to improve it.

Methods

This study was conducted in the medical clinics of NHSL. One hundred and thirty two patients with hypertension between the ages of 40-60 years were randomly selected. Socio-demographic data of the patients was collected using an interviewer administered questionnaire. The mental health score (MHS) was calculated using a validated questionnaire which contained 11 questions about the patient's current mental state. The patients were asked to describe various aspects of their mental status on a scale of 0 to 10 and the MHS was calculated out of a total score of 110. The data was analyzed to describe the above variables in relation to the MHS using SND and Chi square tests.

Results

The mean age of the population was 50.2 years and 54.5% were females. The mean MHS in the sample population was 62.79 (SD=16.04). Age, level of education, alcohol consumption and smoking showed a significant association ($p<0.05$) with the MHS while gender, marital status, religion, monthly family income, BMI, family history, duration and age of onset of hypertension, total number and the types of tablets and the frequency did not.

Conclusions

Young age, low educational level, alcohol consumption and smoking were found to be risk factors for poor mental health while engaging in health promotion activities was found to have a protective effect. Therefore it is recommended to closely monitor and follow up hypertensive patients who are young and those having a poor educational background. Smokers and alcohol users should be advised to change their problem behaviours. Mental health promotion activities should be encouraged in all hypertensive patients.

A poster presentation on this topic is to be presented at the Student Scientific Sessions (2012) of the Faculty of Medicine.