

Abstract

DEPRESSION AMONG PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS ATTENDING THE RHEUMATOLOGY CLINIC OF THE COLOMBO SOUTH TEACHING HOSPITAL

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Background

Rheumatoid arthritis is a common chronic inflammatory disease, which mostly follows a painful, progressively disabling course, and individuals with rheumatoid arthritis suffer more psychological distress than healthy individuals. Psychiatric syndromes have significant implications for patients with rheumatoid arthritis. There is substantial uncertainty regarding the prevalence of depression and the objective of this study is to determine the prevalence of depression among patients with rheumatoid arthritis attending the Rheumatology Clinic of the Colombo South Teaching Hospital.

Method

This is a cross-sectional study of patients who had been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, attending the Rheumatology Review Clinic of the Colombo South Teaching Hospital from July 2006 to November 2006. The study population comprised 204 consecutive patients having Rheumatoid Arthritis. The depressive symptoms were assessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, and the research version of the International Classification of Diseases.

Results

Eighty seven percent of the sample was female of which 81% was married. Of the respondents, 74.5% had been having the illness for over 5 years. Only 4 (2%) patients had been previously referred for psychiatric treatment. The percentage of persons experiencing a

degree of depression was 53 according to the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. The prevalence of depression among the respondents was 32.8% according to International Classification of Diseases 10 criteria. According to the latter tool, out of 67 depressed patients 85.1% experienced mild depression, 13.4% moderate depression, and 1.5% severe depression. The percentage of those married among the depressed patients was 82.1 and 83.6% were suffering from severe disability.

Conclusion

The prevalence of depression was found to be as high as 32.8% compared to the international figure of 13 -20% with the male patients being more affected than females. But however, only 4% patients had been referred for psychiatric opinion. Thus, it is crucial that we place more emphasis on the detection and treatment of depression in RA to improve function and quality of life. Also these two scales only provide an indication of possible depression and anxiety, and thus the actual estimates of prevalence may vary.