

Psycho-Demographic Profiles in Patients with Chronic Dermatoses: Impact on Time Lag for Seeking Health Services

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Abstract:

Background: Revolutionary changes have recently occurred in the way we think about chronic diseases, how we consider what causes them; how we measure their depth and intensity, how we treat them, and, most important how we prevent their occurrence in the first place. It has become increasingly obvious that successful research, prevention, and control efforts require collaborative relationships among various disciplines that collectively embody the necessary expertise to understand all the dimensions of the problems facing them.

Objective: to model the psycho-demographic and behavioral combination associated with chronic dermatoses and their impact on time lag for seeking health services.

Methods: An analytical case-control study was conducted among a group of 98 cases of three common acne, psoriasis and vitiligo chronic dermatoses and 149 controls. The study group was subjected to detailed time lag questionnaire, symptoms check list, toronto alexithymia scale and social readjustment rating scale.

Results: The study revealed that some socio-demographic, behavioral and disease related factors play a relatively more important role towards the patients' practice in seeking medical health care when compared to psychological factors. On the other hand, the association between the psychological problems and chronic dermatoses were clearly evidenced in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations: This study emphasizes the integration and calls for pooling of efforts and talents across many disciplines to capitalize on the synergistic and catalytic potential inherent in such collaborative efforts directed towards best health outcomes for the individuals.

Key words: acne, psoriasis, vitiligo, psychological, behavioral, demographic, time lag, alexithymia, readjustment rating scale.

Introduction:

The evolving understanding of how psycho-demographic and behavioral factors affect health and disease processes has been marked by investigation of specific relationships and mechanisms underlying them. Stress as well as other emotional responses and behaviors are components of complex interactions of genetic, physiological, behavioral, and environmental factors that affect the body's ability to remain or become healthy or to resist or overcome disease. Regulated by nervous, endocrine, and immune systems, and exerting powerful influence on other bodily systems and key health-relevant attitudes (Braum and Posiuszny, 1999). Individuals' subjective beliefs about disease nature, medical professionals and health services are important determinants of health-related

behaviors and perceptions. Little attention has been paid to the role of these beliefs on seeking health services and consequently affecting disease cure or progression (Ditto and Moore, 1995). Cutaneous diseases are one of the most prevailing health problems all over the world. They also have significant effects on psychological well-being and social functioning in a variety of interpersonal situations (Kent and Al' Abadie, 1996). In Egypt, Kasr El Aini out patients clinics registration revealed an increasing trend among cutaneous cases (Annual Hospital Statistics Report, 2002). Chronic and infective skin diseases constitute the two major diagnoses among the Kasr El Aini out patient clinics attendants registrations (Khalil et al 2000). In chronic skin diseases many factors are