

Psychosocial Correlates of Axis I Mental Disorders among Medical Inpatients

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Abstract

Objective: Axis I mental disorders are common and often underdiagnosed in medical settings. The primary objective of this study was to explore possible psychosocial characteristics that could correlate with the presence of mental illness among medical inpatients. **Subjects & Method:** Three hundreds and fifty patients admitted to department of internal medicine -Tanta University Hospital, were assessed for the presence or absence of axis I mental disorders. Patients with and without axis I mental disorders were compared together to detect possible psychosocial correlates of mental disorder in those patients. **Results:** Ninety two patients (26.3 %) admitted department of internal medicine were found to have one or more mental disorder. The age and Marital state of patients with comorbid mental disorder did not differ from those without mental disorder. Women who had comorbid mental disorder outnumbered males. Also, unemployed patients had more comorbid mental disorders. Patients with comorbid major depression had more impairment in functioning. The level of perceived stress was found more while Social support was found less in patients with comorbid mental disorder. The use of health services as implied by number of outpatient visits, number of admissions and length of hospital stay is greater in patients with mental disorders. **Conclusion:** The prevalence of mental disorders among internal medical inpatients is high and increased in women. Mental disorders are associated with more impairment of functioning and more use of health services. Patients who had more stress and less social support are more likely to have an underlying mental disorder.

Introduction:

The relationship between psychological factors and medical conditions are complex. Mental disorders may mimic, aggravate, or interfere with treatment of medical conditions (Hernandez et. al., 2001). Many studies revealed that patients with physical illnesses are more likely to suffer from psychiatric disorders than those who are well, and that psychiatric morbidity in medical patients is a major health problem in general health care, (Berardi et.al., 1999; Liu et.al., 2002). Psychiatric comorbidity in medical outpatients is associated with personal suffering and reduced psychosocial functioning, and impairment in physical and mental functional status, (Lowe et. al., 2003). Also, psychiatric comorbidity was found to be a central contributor of increased medical costs, (Friederich et. al. 2002). The etiology of comorbid Axis I mental disorders and physical diseases is still

disputed and probably multifactorial. This study tried to find out some of psychosocial correlates of mental disorders in patients with medical illness. This may highlight some of possible etiologic factors of comorbid mental disorders in physically ill patient. Also, it may give a clue to better detection and diagnosis of axis I mental disorders in patients with medical illnesses.

Patients and methods:

Three hundreds and fifty patients randomly selected from patients admitted to department of internal medicine of Tanta University Hospital during the period of January 2003 to September 2004, were assessed for the presence or absence of axis I mental disorders. Males and females were equally selected (each constitutes fifty percent of patients). All patients were interviewed by MD- degree psychiatrist.