

P02-12

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF INTERFERON-ALPHA (IFN-ALPHA) THERAPY IN PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC HEPATITIS C INFECTION

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Depression is a common side effect of IFN-alpha therapy. The current prospective study examines the effects of Interferon-alpha on the prevalence of depressive disorders, on cognitive functioning and on quality of life. Life Satisfaction before and the social support during the therapy were considered.

Method: 25 patients with chronic hepatitis C infection were investigated. One month and three months after the beginning of the treatment psychometric observer-rating and self-rating scales were administered to evaluate depressive symptoms (BDI; HAMD). The data on life satisfaction before therapy and health-related quality of life were obtained from the FLZ and the SF-36. Cognitive function was based on the SKT .

Results:

Three months after the initial Interferon-alpha administration in the whole sample significant impairments in health-related quality of life were found in the domains "physical functioning", "role physical", "role emotional", "social functioning" and "vitality". The whole sample showed cognitive impairments.

Three months after the first Interferon-alpha administration 48% (n=12) suffered from moderate clinical depression.

Patients with Interferon-alpha induced clinical depression showed decreased life satisfaction before the initial antiviral therapy - especially in the domains "self-concept", "employment" and "physical health&constitution". Impairments in health-related quality of life (SF-36) were found in the clinical depressive sample in the domains "general health", "social functioning", "role emotional", "vitality" and "mental health".

Conclusion: Hepatitis C is associated with an increased prevalence of depression.

Interferon-alpha patients having low levels of life satisfaction in the domains "self concept", "employment" and "physical health&constitution" seem to face a major risk of depression.