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DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS: LINKS WITH ALEXITHYMIA

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The aim of our study was to assess the prevalence of depression and anxiety in a population of patients treated for multiple sclerosis (MS) and their link with alexithymia.

Method: 31 patients with MS according to McDonald's criteria, and followed in neurology department took part in the study. All patients were evaluated using a protocol to collect the epidemiological, clinical and evolution of the disease. We used versions of Arabized-Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) to assess the mood state and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) for alexithymia.

Results and comments: Participants were divided on 18 women and 13 men with a mean age of 39 years. The prevalence of depression and anxiety were 42% and 52% respectively. The prevalence of alexithymia was 43%. The anxiety was correlated with the degree of disability and age of disease onset. Similarly, depression was more frequently observed in patients with higher EDSS, a long period of evolution. A positive correlation was found between alexithymia, depression and anxiety.

Our study showed that half of all MS patients have mood disorders. However, depression is the most common and most disabling psychiatric disorder in MS. The place of anxiety should not be neglected because in case of comorbidity with depression, can be an aggravating factor. The frequency of alexithymia is high and appears to be positively correlated with depression and anxiety.