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ADULT SEPARATION ANXIETY IN PATIENTS WITH COMPLICATED GRIEF: RELATIONSHIP WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS VERSUS MOOD SPECTRUM SYMPTOMATOLOGY

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Introduction: Around 9-20% of bereaved individuals experience symptoms of complicated grief (CG) associated with significant distress and impairment. Increasing research has been focused on identifying the distinctive set of psychiatric symptoms that characterize this condition with respect to major depression, corroborating the need to include this syndrome in the forthcoming DSM-V as a distinctive diagnosis. Vulnerability to CG has been rooted in attachment disturbances and authors reported that symptoms of separation anxiety in childhood should be considered as predictors of CG onset in adulthood.

Objectives: To date no study explored symptoms of adult separation anxiety among patients with CG with respect to healthy control subjects (HC).

Aims: To explore adult separation anxiety and mood spectrum symptoms in patients with CG with respect to HC.

Methods: 53 patients with CG and 50 control subjects were recruited, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pisa. Assessments: SCID-I/P, the Inventory of Complicated Grief (ICG), the Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire (ASA-27), the Work and Social Adjustment Scale (WSAS), the Impact of Event Scale (IES) and the Mood Spectrum-Self Report (MOODS-SR) lifetime version.

Results: Patients with CG reported significantly higher scores on the MOODS-SR, ASA_27, IES and WSAS with respect to controls. The scores on the ASA_27 were more strongly associated with IES scores with respect to other scales.

Conclusions: Our results suggest a correlation between adult separation anxiety and CG onset after the loss of a loved one in adulthood, with a possible correlation to a post-traumatic stress symptomatology. Further studies are needed.