

Depressive Disorders in Cancer Patients in Hong Kong: Prevalence and Risk Factors

LIU Kwong Sun

Abstract

Objective: To identify the prevalence of depressive disorders in Chinese cancer patients; and to relate depression to demographic and illness variables, treatment-related factors and quality of life.

Method: A two-stage case identification procedure was carried out on a sample of patients (age below 65) admitted consecutively to oncology wards. Patient's depressive status was screened by Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). All high-scorers and a proportion of low-scorers were interviewed for 'definite' depression using Endicott's modification of DSM-IV criteria for major depression. QoL was assessed by Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-General (FACT-G) for all patients.

Results: 146 subjects were recruited. Prevalence of major depression, adjustment disorder and dysthymia after use of sampling weights were 22.6%, 14.4% and 2.7% respectively. Depression was associated with level of pain, past psychiatric history, advanced stage, and being divorced or widowed. No association was found in gender, age, religious affiliation, and type of cancer therapy. Significant correlation was found between depression and all QoL subscales.

Conclusion: Depression in Chinese cancer patients was common. Better detection by screening measures like HADS would facilitate identification and early intervention. Evaluation of demographic variables, illness and treatment-related factors is necessary in order to plan comprehensive psychosocial intervention for these patients.