

Poster presentation

Depression, family support and alexithymia in patients with bronchial asthma

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Background

Several studies have evaluated the relationship of social support and levels of depression. Recent studies have added alexithymia (ie the inability of expressing sentiments) to this relationship. To the best of our knowledge there are no studies that incorporate family support in this relationship, a factor that it is important in the Greek population.

Materials and methods

We studied 12 men and 26 women with spirometrically-proven bronchial asthma. Mean age was 43.79 years (SD: 13.14) and mean duration of disease was 9.24 years (SD: 6.02). The patients responded to the BDI depression scale, the TAS-20 alexithymia scale and the Zulgoner family support scale.

Results

Mean depression score was 14.16 (SD: 7.54), mean alexithymia score was 53.94 (SD: 12.86), with 31% of respondents showing characteristics of alexithymia. Mean family support score was 49.66 (SD: 10.60). A negative correlation was seen between depression and family support (Spearman test $p < 0.01$). Separating the studied subjects in those with (TAS>60) and those without characteristics of alexithymia, the former subgroup showed higher levels of depression (t test $p < 0.01$) while it did not present (Spearman test $p > 0.05$) the negative correlation between family support and depression (this correlation remained strong of course in the patients without alexithymia, Spearman test $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

Although the role of family support is undeniable in curtailing depressive symptoms, the co-presence of alexithymia may downplay the beneficial effects of the family environment. To validate this further studies in more subjects are warranted.