

MEETING ABSTRACT

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Sleep disturbance symptoms and their associations with alexithymia, depression and anxiety

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Background

Several studies indicate that alexithymia and sleep disturbances (especially insomnia) coincide [1]. Aim of the present study is to record the levels of alexithymia, depression and anxiety in a sample of patients with sleep disturbances and to investigate the associations between the above factors.

Materials and methods

The study included fifty (40 male and 10 female) out-patients who were attended a sleep laboratory of our hospital seeking medical support for symptoms of sleep disturbances. Levels of Alexithymia [2], depression and anxiety [3] [4] were assessed, by using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Age and education level were also recorded.

Results

Mean BDI score was 10.8 ± 6.0 , mean STAI score was 45.0 ± 11.0 and mean TAS-20 score was 53.8 ± 14.3 . Mean age and education level were 54.2 ± 13 and 10.0 ± 4.1 , respectively. No correlation was observed between the demographic characteristics of the sample and the scores of the clinical measurements (Pearson correlation $p > 0.05$). In contrary, a strong positive correlation was presented between TAS-20, BDI and STAI.

Conclusions

Our preliminary findings confirm the existence of the association between the sleep disturbance symptoms, alexithymia, depression and anxiety. However, some questions remains: are the associations between sleep disturbances and alexithymia caused by depression and/or anxiety or are independent of them? Further studies are required in order to clarify it.

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