

The prevalence and correlates of depressive symptoms in patients with cancer treated in a Tertiary health care facility in Southern Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a common co-morbidity of cancer. Further, depression and cancer are significant public health issues. Depressive symptoms are found to cause deterioration of quality of life (QoL), leading to physical disabilities/impairments, poor drug adherence, prolonged hospitalization, shortened survival time and risk of suicides. This study identified the prevalence of depressive symptoms and explored correlates of depressive symptoms among patients with cancer in Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted with a sample of 393 cancer patients undergoing treatment at a tertiary care hospital in Southern Sri Lanka. An interviewer-administered questionnaire and the Centre for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale (CES-D) were used to collect information on prevalence and correlates of depressive symptoms. Basic descriptive statistics, independent t-test, and Pearson correlation coefficients were used in the statistical analysis. The mean age of the sample was 56 ±11.9 years and 59% were women. Elevated depressive symptoms (CES-D score ≥ 16) were found in 8.4% of the patients (95% CI: 5.3%, 10.7%). Patients who reported having any form of impairments scored high on CES-D, compared to those with no physical impairments ($p < 0.01$). Patients with low income as well as those with low education had higher scores in CES-D scale. Depressive symptomatology appears to be a considerable health issue in this group. Correlates of depressive symptoms include poor income, low education level, and self-reported physical impairments; these correlates need to be considered in psychological interventions of patients with cancer.

KEYWORDS: Cancer, CES-D, depressive symptoms, impairments, Sri Lanka

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