

PSYCHIATRIC MORBIDITY AND CLINICAL OUTCOME IN A POPULATION OF PATIENTS WITH HEAD AND NECK CANCER

*P. Garrido*¹, *E. Albuquerque*², *A. Tarelho*³, *H. Bastos*⁴

¹Psychiatry, Coimbra Hospital and University Centre, ²Coimbra Regional Oncology Center, Coimbra, ³Leiria Hospital Centre, Leiria, ⁴Coimbra Hospital and University Centre, Coimbra, Portugal

Introduction: Patients with head and neck cancer have to cope with the uncertainty about the evolution of their disease, the need to change risky behaviours as alcohol and nicotine dependence, and even with the mutilation and dysfunction resulting from treatments. Literature shows that these patients suffer from psychiatric comorbidity and high levels of distress with little response to their psycho-social needs. Moreover, alcoholism, smoking and personality disorders are probably risk factors for the onset and development of cancer.

Aims: We propose a research project to determine the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity in patients with head and neck cancer hospitalized in a regional oncology center, and to what extent the psychiatric morbidity predisposes to medical and surgical complications during inpatient treatment.

Methods: We collected socio-demographic variables, clinical variables related to the oncological disease and psychopathological and cognitive variables. For the last ones, the following instruments were used: Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), and CAGE as a screening test for alcohol consumption. Results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS (19th version).

Results: Our preliminary results are in accordance with the available literature, showing high levels of psychopathology in patients with cancer of the head and neck, with associated medical complications during inpatient treatment. These findings stress the need of routine psychiatric assessment in this particular population.