

P03-08 - PERCEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS ON PRIMARY CAREGIVERS

K. Assimakopoulos¹, P. Karanasios², A. Argyriou², G. Iconomou¹, F. Giannakopoulou¹, N. Makris²

¹Psychiatry, University of Patras Medical School, ²Neurology, Saint Andrew's State General Hospital, Patras, Greece

Objectives: Primary caregivers are more likely to have a higher risk of depression and a lower quality of life (QOL). Multiple sclerosis (MS) can adversely affect the psychological and physical function of patients as also of their caregivers. Our aim was to assess the perceived psychological burden and QOL in a sample of primary caregivers of patients with MS under natalizumab treatment.

Methods: 20 males and 10 females primary caregivers (mean age 50.6±12.9 years) of an equal number of patients with MS completed the Greek validated version of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and the EuroQOL (EQ-5D), an instrument measuring health outcome and QOL.

Results: Our sample experienced higher degree of anxiety than depression. The mean score on the 7-item HADS-A subscale (range 0-21) was 10±3.8 and the mean score on the 7-item HADS-D subscale (range 0-21) was 7.8±3.4. Twenty-one caregivers were diagnosed as manifesting anxiety (7 mild/14 moderate anxiety), whereas 13 of them also had depression (5 mild/8 moderate depression). The increased psychological distress was supported further by the responses on the anxiety/depression dimension of health of the EQ-5D. Sixteen persons reported moderate and 5 extreme degree of anxiety/depression. Mean EQ-VAS scores were 60.2±14.5 (range 40-100). Ten caregivers rated their health status with a score of 50 or lower.

Conclusions: Our study revealed that caregivers of patients with MS are psychologically burdened in a significant degree, a fact that obviously deteriorates their QOL. Appropriate psychopharmacological interventions are warranted to reduce caregivers' burden.