Mental Health Screening in Patients with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

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Background: Mental disorders often begin in the vulnerable phase of adolescence and young adulthood. Young people with chronic diseases are particularly at risk. Early recognition of mental health problems is necessary in order to be able to support those affected in a timely and adequate manner. By implementing a web-based generic screening tool for mental health in routine care, patients with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) and mental health conditions can be identified and provided with targeted treatment.

Objectives: To investigate the prevalence of mental health conditions in young people with JIA in routine rheumatology care.

Methods: Mental health screening is implemented as an add-on module to the National Paediatric Rheumatology Database (NPRD). The current data was gathered over a period of 24 months. Patients complete the screening tool which includes the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9, score 0-27) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7, score 0-21) via a web-based questionnaire.

Results: The analysis included 245 patients (75% female) with a mean age of 15.7 years and a mean disease duration of 8.8 years. 38.8% of the patients had oligoarthritis (16.0% OA, persistent/20.8% OA, extended) and 23.3% RF negative polyarthritis. At the time of documentation 49 patients (30.6%) had an inactive disease (cJADAS10 ≤ 1) and 129 (49.4%) no functional limitations (CHAQ ≤ 0). In total, 53 patients (21.6%) had screening values in either GAD-7 or PHQ-9 ≥ 10. Patients with critical mental health screening values showed higher disease activity and more frequent functional limitations than inconspicuous patients (cJADAS10 (mean ± SD): 9.3 ± 6 vs. 4.9 ± 4; CHAQ: 0.66 ± 0.6 vs. 0.21 ± 0.42). When compared to males, females were significantly more likely to report either depression or anxiety symptoms (11.7% vs. 24.9%, p = 0.031).

Conclusion: Every fifth young person with JIA reported mental health problems, however, not even every second of them stated to receive psychological support. The results show that screening for mental health problems during routine adolescent rheumatology care is necessary to provide appropriate and targeted support services to young people with a high burden of illness.

REFERENCES:

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