

Anxiety, Depression and Loneliness in Old Age Arthritis Patients: Stressed or Satisfied

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INTRODUCTION

This study is on the old age people suffering from arthritis. Arthritis is a disorder of the joints, in which the joints become painful, stiff and swollen. Arthritis is considered a stressful chronic illness (Melanson & Downe-Wamboldt, 2003). It may be caused by inflammation or infection in the joint. Some people have arthritis in old age when their joints begin wearing out. Globally, arthritis has a world-wide distribution (Lawrence & Sebo, 1988). It causes a lot of stress to the people. Arthritic disorders like lupus and rheumatoid can also affect other organs in the body with a variety of symptoms, for example, inability to use the hand or walk, Malaise and a feeling of tiredness, Weight loss, Poor sleep, Muscle aches and pains, Tenderness and Difficulty moving the joint. Arthritis can make it very difficult for an individual to remain physically active, contributing to an increased risk of obesity, high cholesterol or vulnerability to heart disease. Individuals with arthritis are also at increased risk of depression, which may be related to fear of worsening symptoms. Elements of the history of the disorder guide diagnosis. Important features are speed and time of onset, pattern of joint involvement, symmetry of symptoms, early morning stiffness, and tenderness, gelling or locking with inactivity, aggravating and relieving factors, and other systemic symptoms. Physical examination may confirm the diagnosis, or may indicate systemic disease. Radiographs are often used to follow progression or help assess severity. Treatment options vary depending on the type of arthritis and include physical therapy, lifestyle changes (including exercise and weight control), orthopedic bracing, medications. Joint replacement surgery may be required in eroding forms of arthritis. Medications can help reduce inflammation in the joint which decreases pain. Moreover, by decreasing inflammation, the joint damage may be slowed. It is known that the persistent pain, joint stiffness, and joint damage of arthritis not only produce substantial physical disability, but also negatively influence numerous aspects of individuals' lives, including functional ability, work, family and social relationships, and psychological status (Escalante & del Rincon, 1999; Yelin & Callahan, 1995; Katz, 1998), as well as lost or reduced independence, uncertainty, and role changes (Melanson & Downe-Wamboldt, 2003).

An examination of coping strategies that people with arthritis use to deal with stress has significant implications (Melanson & Downe-Wamboldt, 2003). Aside from its contribution to theoretical advancements, an understanding of the ways in which people with arthritis cope with stress is essential for developing policies and programs to deal with the sources of stress in their lives, and to establish an effective support system to proactively counteract the negative impact of stress on their health. Particularly, an increasing recognition of the behavioral and psycho-social impact of arthritis has led to a growing awareness for the need to incorporate behavioral and

psycho-social intervention approaches into biomedical treatment for managing arthritis (Simon et al., 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The present study tries to find the relation between stress and life satisfaction among the old age people suffering from arthritis. Here the universe is all old age arthritis patients and the sample is of forty people suffering from arthritis (20 males, 20 females) in an old age home of Chandigarh. For this, purposive sampling method had been used and primary data has been collected on the basis of questionnaire. On the basis of subjects' response the results are discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was designed to find the relation between stress and life satisfaction among the old age people suffering from arthritis. All subjects were tested on a subjective type questionnaire consisting of nine questions. These questions measured health habits, stress symptoms and satisfaction with life. On the basis of subjects' response the major stressors came out to be family, loneliness, health (arthritis) and old age. More than 65% people gave same response. Around 63% people rated the severity of pain to be 7-9 on the scale of 10. And most of them experienced pain almost daily. The major psychological factors which triggered the pain according to the subjects' were loneliness and stress related to their health, family and financial worries. Interestingly, many of these people were trying to cope up with their stress in some or the other way. After going through the results the major coping strategies adopted by the arthritis patients came out to be praying to god, yoga, meditation, morning/evening walk, talking with their friends.

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