Levels of psychological distress in head and neck cancer patients

Aims

To identify levels of:

- psychological distress
- quality of life
- perceived emotional needs

Patients being treated for head and neck cancer may go on to experience psychological distress and poor quality of life.

Method

Sample: 124 HNC patients

Procedure: Audit of all HNC patients attending weekly outpatient clinics. Patients completed self-report questionnaires measuring levels of anxiety, depression (HADS), acute stress (ASDS) and quality of life (WHOQOL-BREF).

- Head and neck cancer outpatient clinic - St Bartholomew’s Hospital, London.

Results

a) Levels of psychological distress in head and neck cancer patients

High scores classified as: Anxiety: ≥8 on Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS); Depression: ≥8 on HADS; Acute stress: ≥55 on Acute Stress Disorder Scale (ASDS). High scores are indicative of clinical disorder.

b) Mean score for overall quality of life, by level of psychological distress.

- Low symptoms
- High symptoms

Clinical implications

- There are high levels of psychological distress in HNC patients.
- Lower quality of life is associated with higher levels of psychological distress.
- A measure of psychological distress may be more useful in clinical settings than measuring QOL alone.
- A high proportion of HNC patients are willing to receive psychological treatment.

References: