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Psychological determinants of depression in stroke patients two months post-stroke: A prospective cohort study

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Background and aims: Depression is a common and debilitating symptom in stroke patients. Demographic and stroke characteristics are only weakly related to post-stroke depressive symptoms (PSDS) and can not be altered. Therefore there is a growing interest in the influence of psychological variables on PSDS. Hence, the aim of this study was to identify psychological factors related to PSDS in patients two months post-stroke.

Methods: Preliminary results of a prospective cohort study of 266 patients assessed at two months post-stroke. Depressive symptoms were determined by the Depression subscale of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (scores ≥ 8 experiencing depressive symptoms). Bivariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses were used to identify psychological factors related to PSDS. Age, gender, severity of stroke, independence in activities of daily living (ADL) post-stroke, and cognitive functioning (Montreal Cognitive Assessment) were used as control variables.

Results: Two months post-stroke, 24% of the patients experienced depressive symptoms. Bivariate analysis showed that passive coping (OR 1.44), neuroticism (OR 1.31) and pessimism (OR 1.18) were positively associated with PSDS. Proactive coping (OR) 0.94, self-efficacy (OR 0.92), extraversion (OR 0.89), optimism (OR 0.72), ADL (OR 0.93), and cognitive functioning (OR 0.89) were negatively associated with PSDS. Multivariate logistic regression analysis showed that more passive coping (OR 1.4), less optimism (OR 0.83) and worse cognitive functioning (OR 0.92) were associated with PSDS (Nagelkerke R-Square 0.32).

Conclusions: This study shows the importance of psychological variables for the experience of depressive symptoms two months post-stroke. For clinicians it is important to become aware of these relationships.

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