Prevalence of depression in cancer patients: Cultural Influence

Co-morbidity between depression and anxiety disorders is common. We investigated a broad phenotype of co-morbid anxiety in cases of major depressive disorder (MDD), and performed a genome-wide association (GWA) study in 1,621 subjects with DSM-IV and/or ICD-10 diagnosis of MDD, derived from three studies: DeCC (Depression Case Control, N = 648), GENDEP (Genome-based Therapeutic Drugs for Depression, N = 413), DeNt (Depression Network, N = 306), and a sample from Bonn and Lausanne (N = 254). Depression and anxiety were assessed using the SCAN interview, and a new variable was created named SUmmary AnXie ty (SUX) score, defined as the sum of scores for the following items: SCAN items 4.001 (general rating of anxiety), 4.002 (general rating of phobia), 4.023 (free-floating anxiety) and 4.024 (anxious foreboding with autonomic symptoms). All subjects therefore had a score between 0 and 8 for the worst and 2nd worst episode, or current episode in GENDEP.

Aim: Depression is the commonest psychological sequela in cancer patients. It is not only challenging to diagnose but its presentation is also influenced by the patients' cultures. This review aims to determine the prevalence of depression in cancer patients across regions of different cultures.

Methods: A literature search using Pubmed electronic database was conducted. Studies were included if they (a) examined the prevalence of depression in cancer patients and (b) were published in English peer-review journal between 2000 and 2009.

Results: 59 studies from 21 countries were reviewed. These studies were conducted in China (5.1%, n = 3), Japan (10.1%, n = 6), Korea (1.7%, n = 1), India (1.7%, n = 1), Pakistan (1.7%, n = 1), Iran (3.4%, n = 2), Jordan (1.7%, n = 1), UK (8.5%, n = 5), Denmark (3.4%, n = 2), Germany (1.7%, n = 1), Netherlands (3.4%, n = 2), Turkey (3.4%, n = 2), Scotland (3.4%, n = 2), Finland (1.7%, n = 1), Norway (1.7%, n = 1), Slovenia (1.7%, n = 1), Ireland (1.7%, n = 1), Italy (3.4%, n = 2), USA (25.4%, n = 15), Canada (5.1%, n = 3) and Australia (8.5%, n = 5).

Prevalence of depression in cancer patients ranged from 3% to 72%. Asia reported the lowest prevalence 3-39% while Europe had the highest prevalence 7-72%. Middle East 0-57%, North America 6-51% and Australia 4-43%.