TRACKING ANXIETY DISORDERS IN ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS WITH THE GAD-7 QUESTIONNAIRE

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BACKGROUND

Anxiety disorders are prevalent and can be disabling when not diagnosed. In chronic diseases, this symptom is often underestimated. Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a chronic disease that affects young adults, with implications for both the physical and mental health of those affected. A prolonged coexistence with pain and deformity that the illness causes often implies alterations and emotional disorders in these patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quantitative cross-sectional study based on the data collected through an application of the Generalized Anxiety Disorders (GAD-7) questionnaire. It’s an instrument used to assess these anxiety disorders, validated in Brazil in 2006. It presents seven items with scores from 0 to 3 in each one, and the total score ranging from 0 to 21. Values higher than or equal to ten are correlated with a generalized anxiety disorder. The Ethical Committee approved the study of research, and the participants filled the free and clarified consent term.

RESULTS

The study involved a total of 104 patients with Ankylosing spondylitis, and 74% were male, with an age range below 45 years seen in 60% of the sample. The level of schooling above seven years presented in almost 70% and disease time above six years in this same proportion. Smoking and alcohol consumption observed in 10% and 21%, respectively. Forty-three percent of the sample was professionally active, almost 30% were unemployed, and 27% were retired. A score greater than or equal to 10 in the total sum of GAD-7 was found in 38% of the patients, thus, filling criteria for generalized anxiety disorder. Two-thirds of the patients diagnosed with an anxiety disorder had schooling above seven years of study. The average GAD-7 score of the positive cases was 12.

CONCLUSION

An anxiety disorder diagnosed in more than one-third of patients with AS. The level of education showed a positive correlation with this diagnosis. The use of an appropriate instrument, such as GAD-7, to assess anxiety may be a device for the determination of this comorbidity, which is very frequent and compromises the well being of those who live with it.