

Abstract

Background: Axial spondyloarthritis (SpA) is group of chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases characterized by progressive spinal deformity and inflammatory back pain, with ankylosing spondylitis (AS) as the most common and severe subtype. Previous studies reported increased depression and anxiety in these patients. However, studies in the local population have not been done.

Aims: To identify the prevalence and determinants of depressive and anxiety disorders in axial SpA patients in the local Chinese population, and to evaluate the performance of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) as a screening tool.

Method: This is a cross-sectional study of 160 consecutive axial SpA patients in the rheumatology outpatient clinic from May to October 2011. Subjects were interviewed by the author using the Chinese-bilingual version of Structured Clinical Interview for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (Axis I) (CB-SCID-I/P) to identify depressive and anxiety disorders. Socio-demographic and clinical data were collected, and validated self-assessment instruments consisting of: Bath Ankylosing Spondylitis Disease Activity Index (BASDAI), Bath Ankylosing Spondylitis Functional Index (BASFI), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) were used to evaluate disease activity, functional status, and perceived social support. The HADS and its subscales were analysed for their performance as screening tools for depression and anxiety.

Results: The current and lifetime prevalence of major depressive disorder was 10.6% and 23.7% respectively. The current prevalence of all depressive disorders, including MDD, dysthymia, minor depressive episode, and adjustment disorders, was 19.4%. The current

prevalence of anxiety disorders was 15.6%. High BASDAI (disease activity) and low MSPSS (perceived social support) scores were independently correlated with current major depressive disorder. High BASDAI (disease activity) and early stage SpA (not fulfilling modified New York criteria for AS) were independently correlated with current anxiety disorders. The full scale HADS performed well in discriminating both major depressive disorder and all depressive disorders using the cut-off score of 13/14. The cut-off score for HADS anxiety subscale in screening for anxiety disorders was 6/7.

Conclusion: The prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders in axial SpA patients was higher than in the general population. Independent predictors were found. Use of the HADS as a screening tool assists rheumatologists in identifying patients with psychological distress.

Keywords: Spondyloarthritis, depression, anxiety, prevalence, correlates, Chinese

Total number of words: 9575