

Abstract

Introduction

Patients with gender identity disorder (GID) experience various discrepancies between their biological and psychological sex. In the extreme cases (i.e. transsexuals), they consider themselves being imprisoned in the bodies of the opposite sex. They are intensely distressed with their sexual organs, and some may undergo hormonal and surgical treatment to assimilate themselves as closely as possible to the gender which they perceive they belong to. Studies have shown that psychiatric morbidities, including Axis I and Axis II disorders are prevalent in GID patients. However, the local scenario remains to be explored.

Aims

- 1) Explore the current and lifetime prevalence of Axis I and Axis II psychiatric disorders in Chinese patients with GID in the Sex Disorder Clinic in a regional public hospital.
- 2) Identify the socio-demographic and clinical correlates of lifetime Axis I psychiatric disorders.

Method

In this cross sectional study, subjects with GID diagnosed according to DSM-IV criteria were consecutively recruited in a local Sex Disorder Clinic from July 2012 to June 2013. All subjects were interviewed by the author using the Chinese Bilingual version of the Structured Clinical Interview for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition

(Axis I) (SCID-I) for Axis I disorders and the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis II personality disorders (SCID-II) for Axis II disorders. Socio-demographic and clinical data of the subjects were collected. Their quality of life and perceived social support were assessed with the Hong Kong Chinese World Health Organization Quality of Life Measure -Abbreviated Version (WHOQOL-BREF) and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) respectively.

Results

Ninety-one subjects with GID were recruited. The point and lifetime prevalence of Axis I disorders were 14.3% and 50.5% respectively. Depressive disorders were the most common Axis I disorder. The prevalence of personality disorders was 20.9% with avoidant personality disorder being the most common. Lower perceived social support was independently associated with lifetime Axis I disorders.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that lifetime psychiatric disorders are common in GID patients in the Sex Disorder Clinic in Hong Kong. Lower perceived social support was associated with lifetime Axis I disorders. Our findings suggested the need for comprehensive and systemic assessment of social resources and enhancement of social support for GID patients.

Keywords: psychiatric, morbidity, gender identity disorder, prevalence, Chinese