

ABSTRACT

Background: Hepatitis B viral infection is one of the commonest infections in the world, in Southern China in particular. This infection has had a chronic and fluctuating course over many years. A high rate of psychiatric morbidity is found in patients infected with chronic Hepatitis B (CHB) virus. However, little about the prevalence and associated factors of psychiatric morbidity is known among Chinese patients in Hong Kong. There is no well-established screening tool for psychiatric disorders in this patient population.

Aim: To determine the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity, identify correlates of psychiatric morbidities and evaluate the effectiveness of the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) as a screening tool for psychiatric morbidity in Chinese patients infected with Chronic Hepatitis B.

Method: This is a cross-sectional study that randomly recruited 160 CHB patients from a local Infectious Disease clinic from October 2008 to June 2009. Participants' characteristics including socio-demographic background, past medical and psychiatric history, clinical status and treatment of CHB patients were recorded. GHQ-12 was administered. Psychiatric diagnoses were established by using the Chinese-bilingual

Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders, patient research version (CB-SCID-I/P). Scores of GHQ-12 were compared against the psychiatric diagnoses.

Results: One hundred and forty-nine participants were interviewed. The point prevalence of overall psychiatric disorders, depressive disorders and anxiety disorders were 32.2%, 16.1% and 14.1% respectively. Major depressive disorder is the commonest depressive disorder while generalized anxiety disorder is the commonest anxiety disorder. Two independent factors were identified as being associated with current psychiatric disorders, current depressive disorders and current anxiety disorders, namely family history of psychiatric disorder, absence of knowledge of mode of transmission of HBV.

Absence of a confidant is an independent factor for current depressive disorders and use of herbal medicine in the past one month is an independent factor for current anxiety disorders. The GHQ-12 is effective in screening for current psychiatric disorders, depressive disorders and anxiety disorders with good sensitivity and specificity using the cut-off point at 3/4 in the [0-0-1-1] scoring system and 15/16 in the [0-1-2-3] scoring system.

Conclusion: Psychiatric disorders are common in Chinese CHB patients. Identifying associating factors and using GHQ-12 as a screening tool are useful to identify patients with psychiatric disorders in an Infectious Disease clinic.