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ALEXITHYMIA AND PAIN EXPERIENCE IN DEPRESSIVE PATIENTS

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Introduction: Alexithymia appears as an inhibition of recognizing and describing the mental conditions. It is often connected with psychosomatic illness or depression.

Aims: The aim of this study was to compare depressive patients with healthy persons in terms of the prevalence and level of the alexithymia and pain feeling.

Methods: The examined group (E) consists of 16 patients with diagnosed depression (11 women, 44,6±11,6 year old). The control group (C) consists of 14 randomly chosen persons (10 women, 40,0±15,3 year old) who achieved < 11 points in the Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI). The alexithymia level was examined with TAS - 26 questionnaire (difficulty of recognizing the feelings and somatic senses (ODR), concrete thinking (MK), difficulty of expressing the feelings (TRW) and the lack of imagination (U)). The intensity of pain was examined with the questionnaire SF-MPQ. The scale BPCQ was used to examine beliefs about pain control.

Results: No statistical differences about age, sex, the U feature in TAS-26 scale and the results of BPCQ test were shown. The differences between groups E and C appeared in the alexithymia intensity range (75,3±14,4 v. 62,4±8,2pts, p=0,07), the ODR feature (23,7±6,7 v. 13,0 ±4,1pts, p< 0,001), MK (18,9±4 v. 23,1±5,3pts, p=0,036) and TRW (13,4 ±2,6 v. 9,6 ± 2,8pts, p=0,001). The E group featured significantly higher pain intensity (p=0,012).

Conclusions: The patients with depression suffer from alexithymia very often. The prevalence of upper difficulties and great intensity of pain could suggest a psychosomatic component of pain affections.