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Quality of Life, Emotional Distress and Coping Strategies in Patients with Epilepsy

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Introduction: The epilepsy literature shows a high prevalence of psychological and social disorders which are considered more handicapping than seizures themselves.

Objectives:

- To assess the quality of life (QOL) of patients with epilepsy.
- Determine the relationship between QOL and level of anxiety, depression and coping strategies .

Methods: It was a cross-sectional study involving 50 subjects with epilepsy and followed in the outpatient psychiatry department. The state-trait anxiety inventory was used to assess the level of anxiety, whereas the Beck depression inventory was used to measure the severity of depression. The QOL was assessed using the quality of life in epilepsy inventory (QOLIE -31). The items of the Brief COPE were used to assess coping strategies.

Results: Coping strategies most frequently used were: emotional support (mean score = 5.52), acceptance (mean score = 5.22) and the emotional expression (mean score = 4.18), but none used the strategies of problem avoidance and self-blame.

The average overall score of QOL of our patients was 71.66. It was significantly higher in patients with a minimum level of anxiety ($p = 0.012$) and those using active coping strategies ($p << 0.005$), acceptance ($p << 0.005$) and distraction ($p = 0.015$). There was no statistically significant relationship between the level of QOL and that of depression.

Conclusion: Our results emphasize the importance of reinforcing strategies of adjustment to illness and the role of the anxiety associated with the unpredictability of seizures; it seems to have an important impact on QOL of patients with epilepsy.