



The Impact of Health Literacy on Psychological Distress in Multiple Sclerosis Patients: Insights from a Cross-sectional Study

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INTRODUCTION

Health literacy, the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions, plays a crucial role in managing chronic diseases. Multiple sclerosis (MS), a debilitating neurological disorder characterized by unpredictable symptoms such as fatigue, mobility issues, and cognitive changes, presents a unique set of challenges for patients. These challenges often lead to psychological issues like stress, anxiety, and depression. This cross-sectional analytical study explores the association between health literacy and these psychological states in MS patients, offering insights into the intricate interplay between knowledge and mental well-being in chronic disease management.

DESCRIPTION

MS patients frequently encounter overwhelming information regarding their condition, treatment options, and lifestyle adjustments. The ability to comprehend and utilize this information effectively can significantly impact their mental health. Patients with higher health literacy are generally better equipped to manage their symptoms, adhere to treatment regimens, and navigate healthcare systems, potentially leading to reduced psychological distress. Conversely, those with lower health literacy may struggle to understand their condition and its implications, exacerbating feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. In this study, a cohort of MS patients was assessed for health literacy levels and psychological distress. Health literacy was measured using standardized tools that evaluate patients' abilities to read, comprehend, and apply health-related information. Psychological distress was assessed using validated questionnaires for stress, anxiety, and depression. The study's findings reveal a significant association between health literacy and psychological well-being, underscoring the importance of health education and support for MS patients.

Patients with higher health literacy levels reported lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. This can be attributed to their enhanced ability to understand their condition, effectively communicate with healthcare providers, and make informed decisions about their treatment and lifestyle. Higher health literacy enables patients to feel more in control of their health, which can alleviate the uncertainty and fear often associated with MS. Moreover, these patients are more likely to engage in proactive health behaviors, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition, which further contribute to their mental well-being. Conversely, patients with lower health literacy levels exhibited higher levels of psychological distress. The complexity of MS and its treatment can be daunting for those who struggle to understand medical information. Misunderstandings and confusion about the disease can lead to poor disease management, resulting in a sense of helplessness and increased psychological burden. These patients may also experience difficulties in communicating their concerns and symptoms to healthcare providers, leading to unmet needs and further exacerbation of stress, anxiety, and depression. The study highlights the critical need for targeted interventions to improve health literacy among MS patients.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this cross-sectional analytical study demonstrates a clear association between health literacy and psychological well-being in MS patients. Higher health literacy is linked to lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, emphasizing the importance of health education in chronic disease management. Efforts to improve health literacy should be a priority in the care of MS patients, as they hold the potential to significantly enhance patients' mental health and quality of life. As healthcare continues to evolve, integrating health literacy into patient care strategies will be essential in addressing the complex needs of MS patients and supporting their journey toward better health outcomes.

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