

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS PATIENTS AND HEALTHY CONTROLS AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH DISEASE RELATED FACTORS

A. Poullos¹, A.L. Christopoulos¹, D.K. Kitsos², K.I. Voumvourakis², G. Gasparinatos², E. Stamboulis²

Department of Psychology, University of Athens, Athens¹ & Department of Neurology, Attikon University Hospital, University of Athens, Athens², Greece

derven17@yahoo.com

Purpose: To investigate the psychopathology of multiple sclerosis (MS) patients, as estimated by the General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) in contrast to healthy controls and its relation with MS variables and disability status as assessed by EDSS.

Methods: The sample consisted of 80 participants, 40 MS patients and 40 Healthy Controls matched for gender, age and socioeconomical status. There were 30 (75%) women and 10 (25%) men, 27 (67.5%) RRMS patients, 8 (20%) SP patients and 5 (12.5%) PP patients in the MS group, 26 (65%) of whom were on systematic treatment.

Mean comparisons were performed using Student's t test while effect sizes were estimated by Cohen's d coefficient. Percentage analogy differences were tested using chi-square tests, corrected by Fischer's exact test for 1 df. Correlations were investigated using Pearson's r coefficient.

Results: MS patients exhibited significantly more mental health problems than the healthy controls. The effect size of the presence of positive MS diagnosis ranged from large to very large in both the overall psychological distress and separate aspects of physical problems, anxiety - insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression. There were significantly more MS patients who could be diagnosed with mental health disorders (non psychotic disorders of axis I, DSM-IV). Finally, no aspects of psychopathology were significantly correlated with disease variables or disability status.

Conclusions: Psychopathology in MS patients is frequent and evident. As it is not directly associated with illness duration, medication or disability, special care should be taken in treating psychopathology in MS patients.