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Correspondence

Psychiatric co-morbidities in Crohn's disease: an often overlooked aspect

Comorbidades psiquiátricas na doença de Crohn: um aspecto geralmente negligenciado

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the recent article by Lima et al.,¹ Crohn's disease may be associated with significant psychiatric illnesses.

An incidence rate of depression as high as 32% has been reported in patients with underlying Crohn's disease.² Higher degrees of depression are observed in patients with a poor quality of life. Younger individuals with underlying Crohn's disease are almost 2.75 times more likely to develop persistent depression.³ Similarly, patients with low economic status tend to develop a more severe degree of depression.⁴ Individuals with extra-intestinal involvement, such as joint involvement, also tend to report higher degrees of depression.

A similar association is observed with the development of anxiety in Crohn's disease patients. Nearly 24% of them develop anxiety.³ In a recent study, Loftus et al. showed that younger patients with underlying Crohn's disease are almost 4.35 times more likely to develop persistent anxiety.³ Certain therapies, such as infliximab, actually worsen the anxiety. Crohn's disease patients also report high degrees of fatigue, which may be exacerbated by the development of concurrent depression.⁵

Similarly, patients may present with isolated bipolar disorder.⁶ Treatment with steroids especially predisposes Crohn's disease patients to manic episodes. Holroyd et al., in a recent study, reported that nearly 57% of patients with Crohn's disease who developed a manic episode had received recent prednisone therapy.⁷

The above examples clearly highlight the significant psychiatric co-morbidity of Crohn's disease and the need to address these as soon as possible after the diagnosis is made.

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