

PREVALENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS IN URBAN HOSPITAL OUTPATIENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of psychological distress and associated factors among outpatients in an urban hospital in South Africa.

METHOD

A sample of 1532 (56.4% men and women 43.6%) consecutively selected patients from different hospital outpatient departments were interviewed with a structured questionnaire.

RESULTS

Based on the assessment of the Kessler 10 17.1% of the patients (15.5% among men and 19.4% among women) had severe psychological distress.

Logistic multiple regression identified for men no income, poor health status, migraine headache and tuberculosis and for women lower education, no income, having been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease, stomach ulcer and migraine headache were significantly associated with severe psychological distress.

CONCLUSION

The study found high prevalence of psychological distress among hospital out-patients in South Africa. Brief psychological therapies of adult patients with anxiety, depression or mixed common mental health problems treated in hospital out-patient departments are indicated. Accurate diagnosis of comorbid depressive and anxiety disorders in patients with chronic medical illness is essential in understanding the cause and in optimizing the management of somatic symptom burden

Table 1: Psychological distress by sex in percent

	Kessler 10 score	Total (n = 1532)	Men (n = 864)	Women (n = 668)
No significant distress	10-19	50.3	53.5	46.0
Mild distress	20-24	18.6	17.8	19.6
Moderate distress	25-29	14.0	13.2	15.0
Severe distress	30-50	17.1	15.5	19.4
		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Total Kessler 10 score		21.5 (8.9)	20.9 (8.7)	22.4 (9.2)*



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