

Emotional distress and needs in Italian cancer patients: prevalence and associations with socio-demographic and clinical factors

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Since emotional distress is a relevant psycho-social component of an oncological disease experience, its study is useful in multidisciplinary patient cancer care. In the present research, emotional distress together with needs during hospitalization were recorded and their associations with several socio-demographic and clinical variables were verified.

Methods and study design. Five hundred and forty-four consecutive oncological inpatients completed two self-assessment questionnaires concerning emotional distress and needs (i.e., Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, Needs Evaluation Questionnaire).

Results. 27.4% and 20.8% of the enrolled patients were probable cases, respectively, for anxiety and depression; when possible cases were included the percentages raised to 52.5% and 39.3%, respectively. Furthermore, 11.9% and 20.2% of participants were simultaneously probable and possible cases for both conditions. Few differences in anxiety and depression according to socio-demographic and clinical variables were demonstrated, whereas needs seemed to be more frequently associated to them. Finally, needs also seemed to be associated with both anxiety and depression, with possible and probable cases for anxiety and depression displaying more needs than non-cases.

Conclusions. The implications for both the quality of care and disease adjustment by cancer patients are discussed together with study limitations.

Key words: cancer, emotional distress, needs, oncology.

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