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Psychological and emotional problems in adolescents with Epilepsy

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Background: Psychological, social and emotional outcomes of epilepsy are not always obvious. Very often epilepsy-related psychological and emotional problems remain undetected and therefore ignored. As being one of the most stigmatized diseases, epilepsy causes many hidden and apparent problems like stigma and depression seem to be the most prevalent of them.

Aim: Aim of the study was to reveal stigma-related attitudes and relation between stigma and depression level in adolescents with epilepsy.

Methods & Materials: 48 patients and 48 controls aged 13-18 years participated in the research. Card sorting task was used to reveal stigma-related attitudes: Participants were given a stack of cards and were asked to group them together as it makes sense to them (no right or wrong answers). The results of categorization were fixed in protocol. To assess the level of depression we used Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).

Results: For qualitative data, cluster analysis has been used. Results of the analysis revealed that social functioning and relationships appear to be the most important for adolescents suffering from epilepsy; positive emotional and social relationships are mediated by maintaining successive relationships with other members of the society; family seems to be considered by adolescents as a stable source of social respect. Safety and regime compliance are perceived as guaranteed success and luck. According to BDI completion results, 5.5% of patients have severe to extreme depression level, 18.2% have severe-moderate level, 27.3% have mild-moderate level, 49.1% had no depression. Gender differences: Girls with epilepsy, as well as healthy ones were more depressed than boys. Seizure control appeared to be a significant factor for depression level. In patients with well-controlled seizures, 60% reported no depression. Whilst in patients with uncontrolled seizures, only 37.9% reported no depression. Surprisingly, control group data have shown only slight difference: Only 54.2% of healthy adolescents' data revealed no depression.

Conclusions: Social issues appear to be of biggest importance for adolescents with epilepsy. Evaluation of emotional state revealed that severe and extreme depression level is observed only in female adolescents with epilepsy. In both, control and patients groups, girls appeared to be more depressive than boys. As was expected, seizure control factor had significant influence on depression level. Surprisingly in control group healthy adolescents, mild-moderate depression rates appeared even higher than in patients with good seizure control. Generally speaking, depression rates in healthy merit attention, 48.8% of reported depression of different levels is too high a percentage for control group. For future, we are considering to conduct deeper and more complete research of depression level in healthy adolescents.

Biography

Maia Machvariani-Tsereteli completed her MSc in Clinical Neuropsychology from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. Currently, she is pursuing PhD in the same university. She is also working as Neuropsychologist (National programs on prevention and early diagnosis of epilepsy in children and adults) at the Institute of Neurology and Neuropsychology and delivers lectures and seminars as Assistant Professor at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She conducted researches on naming development neuropsychological and neurolinguistic analysis, the research of creativity in Georgian population-Torrans Creativity Test adaptation, neuropsychological analysis of human executive and other cognitive functions during natural aging, stigma and self-stigma in adolescents with epilepsy.

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