

Association of Expressed Emotion in Caretakers with Severity of Depression in Patients of Major Depressive Disorder

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Abstract: **Background:** Expressed emotion refers to a global index of particular emotions, attitudes and behaviours expressed by relatives (caretaker) about a family member diagnosed with psychiatric illness. Expressed emotion (EE) is the general reflection of the family's attitude towards the patient as a precursor to relapse in major psychiatric disorders. **Materials and Methods:** A total of 40 patients with depression were recruited from Psychiatric OPD S.S.G. Hospital Vadodara and association between severity of depression and expressed emotion was measured. **Results:** Pearson Correlation Coefficient was found to be $r = 0.7418$ with p value < 0.0001 for this study. Hence, correlation between expressed emotion in caretakers and severity of Depression in patients with MDD is significantly positive. **Conclusion:** Expressed emotion in caretakers was associated with severity of Depression in Major Depressive Disorder patients.

Keywords: depression, expressed emotion

1. Introduction

Expressed emotion refers to a global index of particular emotions, attitudes, and behaviours expressed by relatives about a family member diagnosed with psychiatric illness. The concept of EE was introduced in studies done by Brown et al¹, where it was shown to have an effect on relapse of schizophrenic patients. Expressed emotion (EE) is the general reflection of the family's attitude towards the patient as a precursor to relapse in major psychiatric disorders. There is vast majority of evidence that the quality of family relationships is closely related to the development, maintenance and treatment response of many psychiatric disorders. The roles of families in the care of people with psychiatric disorders and the ensuing caregiver burden have been increasingly acknowledged in the research literature in the last three decades. The chronic burden of care giving to a patient with psychiatric illness is likely to generate negative emotions.

Aim

To explore the association of high expressed emotions of caregivers with severity of illness in patients of Major Depressive Disorder.

Methodology

This was a cross sectional study conducted on 40 patients of Major Depressive Disorder who were on medication, attending Psychiatry OPD of SSG hospital, Vadodara. Expressed emotion in caretakers was measured using Level of Expressed Emotion scale (LEE) and severity of Major Depressive Disorder was measured using Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D). Only those patients with HAM-D score more than 8 were included in the study. Pearson correlation coefficient test was used to measure the strength of association between expressed emotion in caretakers and severity of Depression in patients with MDD with P value < 0.05 taken as significant.

2. Results

1. The study population consisted of a total of 40 patients diagnosed as having Major Depressive Disorder. Patients were selected from outpatient department of psychiatry through serial sampling. (mean age of MDD patient's was 46.07 with a standard deviation of 10.6226)

Correlation between LEE, Duration Illness and HAMD1

Sr. No.	Pearson Correlation	Correlation Value (r)	p-Value	Interpretation
1	HAMD1 and LEE	0.742	0.000*	Positive, statistically significant correlation

Pearson Coefficient of Correlation applied. p value < 0.05 was taken as statistically significant

Correlation between HAMD at first assessment (HAMD1) with Expressed emotion variable

Sr. No.	Pearson Correlation	Correlation Value (r)	p-Value	Interpretation
1	HAMD1 with Perceived lack of emotional support	0.715	0.000*	Positive, Statistically significant correlation
2	HAMD1 with Perceived irritability	0.715	0.000*	Positive, Statistically significant correlation
3	HAMD1, with Perceived intrusiveness	0.755	0.000*	Positive, Statistically significant correlation
4	HAMD1 with Perceived criticism	0.690	0.000*	Positive, Statistically significant correlation

Pearson Coefficient of Correlation applied P value < 0.05 was taken as statistically significant

The above table shows the correlation of individual components of LEE Scale with HAMD score on first assessment. It shows positive correlation between each individual component of LEE Scale with HAMD Score

which implies that HAMD score is higher in patients with higher score on Individual component of LEE Scale & Vice a Versa.

3. Discussion

The present study was conducted to explore expressed emotions of caregivers and severity of illness in patients of Major Depressive Disorder and their association with each other.

Expressed emotion was studied extensively in schizophrenia previously. In addition, there is a growing literature concerning the role of EE in Unipolar depression^{2,3}, Bipolar disorder⁴, Eating disorders⁵ and Dementia⁶. Few studies have examined the relationship between EE and Mood disorder. It is well established that high family levels of EE are consistently associated with higher rates of relapse in patients with schizophrenia. The first study to undertake the EE measure and connect it to the course of schizophrenia was investigated by Brown et al.⁷ where the patients were followed up for 9 months after they were discharged and sent to their home from hospital. It was found that prolonged contact of patients with the critical caregivers determines the relapse in schizophrenia.⁸

Kavanagh⁹ reviewed 26 of studies on EE and found that the mean relapse rate was 48% for patients residing with high EE families and 21% for those in low EE families. A comprehensive analysis by Bebbington and Kuipers¹⁰ of data from 1,346 patients established the relationship between family caregiver's EE and relapse, and also the protective factor of reduced face-to-face contact for patients in high EE families.

This study found that expressed emotion is significantly associated with severity of MDD. Correlation value between expressed emotion and MDD was 0.742 and p value was less than 0.05. There was high chance of relapse in families of high expressed emotion.

4. Limitations

Sample size is less in this study. 2. It is cross sectional study.

5. Conclusion

This study found that expressed emotion is significantly associated with severity of MDD. Correlation value between expressed emotion and MDD was 0.742 and p value was less than 0.05. There was high chance of relapse in families of high expressed emotion. Further studies need to be done on larger sample size to throw more light on the above association.

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