

Psychosocial Stress and Type-I Personality Traits among Hepatitis C Patients

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The present study explores the levels of psychosocial stress and type I personality traits among hepatitis C patients. A sample of 200 hepatitis C patients was taken from the Out Patient Department of Gastroenterology Department of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Islamabad. To assesses the psychosocial stress and type 1 personality traits the Stress Inventory was administered on the patients Our results indicated a positive correlation between severity of the disease and object dependence loss, disclosure of negative experiences and egoism. Our results also showed negative correlation between severity of disease and rationalizing conflicts / frustrations. Furthermore, a significant difference in disclosure of negative experiences and egoism was found between patients who have received interferon therapy and those who have not yet received interferon therapy. The findings of this study have several implications for the Gastroenterologists and other relevant professionals in understanding the needs of hepatitis C patients with respect to their condition before and after receiving interferon therapy.

Keywords: psychosocial stress, type I personality, Hepatitis C.

Individuals suffering from a chronic illness frequently experience stress which may cause physical and emotional changes in the body, and increase the vulnerability of these patients to other physical and psychological ailments (Kraus, et al, 2004). During the last few decades, several researches were carried out to explore the psychosocial determinants of chronic illnesses (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000; Evans, Barer, & Marmor, 1994; Leon & Walt, 2001; Majer & Saper, 2000; Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999). The main focus of these studies was on cancer and coronary heart diseases (CHD) (Yousfi, Matttews, Amelang & Schmidt-Rathjens, 2004). Nevertheless, among many chronic illnesses, hepatitis C is found to be one of the public health issues, which adversely affects the psychological well being and social lives of individuals suffering from this disease (Wright, Millson, & Tompkins, 2005). It is estimated that about 170 million persons are infected with HCV globally and 3 to 4 million persons are newly infected each year (WHO, 2006). It is further revealed that the prevalence of hepatitis C is 5.3% in Africa is, 1.7% in America, 4.6% in Eastern Mediterranean, 1.03% in Europe, 2.15% in South-East Asia and 3.9% in Western Pacific (WHO, 2008); in Pakistan prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) has been reported to be ranging from 0.7% to 20% (Shah & Shabbir, 2002; Khokhar, Gill & Yawar, 2005), and its is About 10 million Pakistanis are infected with Hepatitis C, and the prevalence is marked among high risk population having commonest mode of transmission such as unsterilized needles and contaminated instruments (Umer & Bilal, 2012).

Chronic hepatitis C infection can lead to liver damage, fibrosis of liver, steatosis and liver cancer (Franciscus & Highleyman, 2008). In addition to the physical ailments, patients with hepatitis C often develop social and psychological problems particularly social isolation, which

subsequently affects mental health (Blasiolo, Shinkunas, LaBrecque, Arnold, & Zickmund, 2006; Sutton, 2007). In addition it has been observed that a crisis situation can exacerbate the susceptibility of individuals having certain personality types, which make them more vulnerable for certain diseases and disorders (Stern, Herman & Slavin, 2003).. According to Grossarth – Maticsek's theory of disease prone personality (as cited in Nagano, Nagase, Sudo, & Kubo, 2004), type –1 personality is positively associated with the risk of chronic disease such as cancer and is characterized by feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness (Nagano & Sudo, 2001). It is also mentioned that Typ-1 personality exhibit prominent characteristics of over cooperativeness, unassertiveness, inexpressiveness of negative emotions, avoiding of conflicts, and defensiveness in response to stress (Eliasz, Hampson, & Raad, 2005).

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