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Mental health of older adults living in nursing homes in Slovakia – Results of a preliminary study

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Key words: anxiety, depression, loneliness, religious coping, social support.

Background

Loneliness is a serious public health problem of an ageing population. The prevalence of loneliness in elderly population was estimated to rise from 10% to 45%. In elderly population, loneliness is considered as a risk factor for mental health disorders, especially depression. Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health disorders worldwide and their prevalence is increasing, especially among seniors who are hospitalised and living in nursing homes.

Objective

The objective is to assess associations between loneliness, depression, anxiety, social support, and religious coping in seniors living in nursing homes in Slovakia.

Methods

The University of California Loneliness Scale – Version 3, Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Brief Religious Coping Scale, and functional status were recorded and evaluated in a sample of 106 seniors. Associations between variables were assessed by Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis.

Results

On average, seniors were identified to have lower rates of perceived loneliness, with probable depression and anxiety identified as 26.7% and 17%, respectively. Higher rates of loneliness were significantly related to higher rates of depression and anxiety, lower rates of perceived social support, and higher rates of negative religious coping. Anxiety was significantly predicted only by higher rates of loneliness. Religious coping was not related to either depression or anxiety rates.

Conclusion

Loneliness was related to the risk of developing depression and anxiety in our sample. People with professions related to helpful attitude, including nurses, should focus on screening and reducing loneliness in seniors living in nursing homes.