POSTER PRESENTATION



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Alexithymia, an impairment of emotional cognitive processing, is a candidate risk factor for carotid artery plaque formation in HIV-infected patients

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From Tenth International Congress on Drug Therapy in HIV Infection Glasgow, UK. 7-11 November 2010

Purpose of the study

Vascular aging is now one major concern in the care of HIV infected patients, as many factors may contribute to its faster progression in comparison with the general population. We investigated several psychological factors including Alexithymia, Type D personality, Mental and Physical Components (MCS and PCS) of Quality of Life (QoL) and Depression in a single Italian HIV cohort, well characterized for traditional cardiovascular (CV) risk factors and intima-media thickness of carotid arteries.

Methods

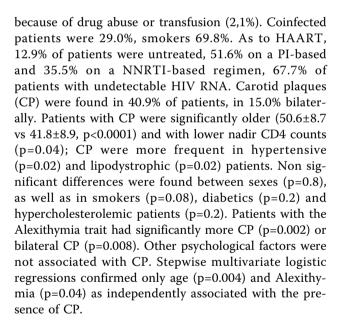
HIV infected patients followed at our Institution were consecutively enrolled from February to June, 2010. Carotid Intima-Media Thickness and the presence of plaque (s) were investigated by B-mode ultrasonography. Alexithymia was assessed with the 20-item Toronto-Alexithymia-Scale (TAS-20, positive score \geq 49), Type D personality with the DS14 Distress Scale, depression symptoms with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, positive score \geq 15) and QoL with the SF12 questionnaire. All statistical analyses were carried out using Stata 9.0 package.

Summary of results

We enrolled 93 HIV infected patients, 75.3% males, aged 45.4±9.8y (r. 21-69), 65.6% infected through heterosexual (39,8%) or homosexual (25,8%) exposure, 32.3%

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Conclusions

Alexithymia in our series appeared as more tightly associated with CP than most traditional CV risk factors. If this correlation will be confirmed, diagnosis of Alexithymia may allow psychological intervention programs to reduce CV risk in HIV patients.

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Published: 8 November 2010



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doi:10.1186/1758-2652-13-S4-P70

Cite this article as: Vadini *et al.*: Alexithymia, an impairment of emotional cognitive processing, is a candidate risk factor for carotid artery plaque formation in HIV-infected patients. *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 2010 **13**(Suppl 4):P70.

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