

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SARCOIDOSIS: ALEXYTHYMIA AND HEALTH ANXIETY AS FACTORS DIFFERENTIATING PATIENTS FROM HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS

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Background: Sarcoidosis is a chronic systemic granulomatous disease of unknown etiology. Although hereditary and environmental factors are thought to be related to its development, psychoemotional stress related factors seem to play an important role either. Previous studies demonstrated that patients with sarcoidosis have elevated fatigue, higher prevalence of depression and higher the magnitude of stressful life events compared with control healthy group. To date, however, no previous study reported alexythymia and anxiety sensitivity in sarcoidosis. **Objectives:** The aims of this pilot study were to investigate relationship between sarcoidosis and alexythymia and to evaluate differences in the level of depression, anxiety, anxiety sensitivity and fatigue between sarcoidosis patients and healthy control individuals. **Methods:** 33 (17 female) patients with sarcoidosis and 27 (13 female) matched healthy subjects completed the following: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3, Toronto Alexythymia Scale, and Fatigue Assessment Scale. **Results:** The prevalence of depression (29%), anxiety (31%) and fatigue (48%) among clinical group were high but did not differ significantly from the control group. However, patients were more alexithymic, exhibited more difficulty describing emotions and more externally oriented thinking than control subjects. Moreover, they were more concerned about their physical health than control group. **Conclusions:** These data confirm earlier reports that fatigue, anxiety and depression are common in patients with sarcoidosis and extended them by showing that patients had more physical concerns and more alexythymic features than healthy individuals. It could be hypothesized that higher alexythymia, which indicates poor ability to cope with emotional stimuli and imposes autonomic dysregulation, might contribute to the development of this disease. More research are needed to investigate psychoemotional factors implicated in sarcoidosis and to examine prevalence of psychopathology in this disorder.