

Session 1 - Poster 11

Alexithymia in Fibromyalgia Syndrome: Is it a discriminant factor?

Ada Ghiggia¹, Valentina Tesio², Annunziata Romeo¹, Francesca Monoli³, Fabrizio Colonna³, Paolo Leombruni⁴, Enrico Fusaro³, Riccardo Torta⁴, and Lorys Castelli¹

¹ University of Turin, Italia

² Department of Neuroscience, University of Turin

³ A.O.U. Città della Salute e della Scienza Hospital of Turin

⁴ Department of Neuroscience, University of Turin; Città della Salute e della Scienza Hospital of Turin

Background. Fibromyalgia (FM) is a chronic syndrome characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain associated with other symptoms such as psychological distress and alexithymia. We aimed at evaluating whether the presence of alexithymia could be considered a discriminant factor to identify different subtypes of FM.

Methods. One hundred eighty-five FM female patients were recruited at the “A.O.U. Città della Salute e della Scienza” Hospital of Turin and assessed with the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) for alexithymia. Psychological distress was assessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the Distress Thermometer (DT) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). The Short-Form 36 Health Survey (SF-36) was used for patients’ quality of life.

Results. Patients had a mean (SD) age of 52.1 (10.4) years and a mean duration of the disease of 107.54 (98.7) months. The TAS-20 showed the presence of alexithymia in 25.9% of the patients (48/185) (FM_A group). The comparison between FM_A and FM patients without alexithymia (FM_nA) revealed that the FM_A group had statistically significant higher scores in the VAS ($p=.003$), in the HADS ($p<.001$), in the DT ($p<.001$) and in the PSS ($p<.001$), and statistically significant lower scores in the majority of the sub-scales of the SF-36 ($p<.05$), suggesting a worse quality of life.

Conclusion. The presence of alexithymia could be considered a discriminant factor that identifies a subtype of FM patients characterized both by higher pain and higher psychological distress.