

Comparative study of functional impairment in patients with schizophrenia, major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder

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Current Psychiatry. Ain Shams University (Print)

2008 v15 n2

Functional impairment associated with mental illness is a major contributor to the global burden of disease. The present study looks at some aspects of functional impairment and quality of life attributable to three mental disorders: schizophrenia, major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. This study aimed to evaluate the functional impairment in the studied groups and to compare the degree of impairment with the quality of life and severity of illness among the three disorders. A total of 127 patients using services of a major mental health hospital in Saudi Arabia, between Jan 2007 and Dec 2007, who were diagnosed as per ICD-10 criteria of mental and behavioral disorders, were included in the study. The level of functional impairment was assessed by using the WHO Psychiatric Disability Assessment Schedule (WHO/ DAS II). The 36 Short Form health survey (SF-36) were applied to assess quality of life. Severity was assessed by the application of some commonly used rating scales for each specific disorder. Functional impairment was significantly greater among participants with a current psychiatric diagnosis and the functional impairment varied by type of disorder. Disorders found to be independently associated with functional impairment were schizophrenia and major depression. All the 3 disorders under study are associated with a significant functional impairment; schizophrenia being maximally impaired. Substantial proportions of persons with generalized anxiety disorder that are not usually classified as a major mental disorder reported moderate and severe functional impairment. Mental disorders are associated with a significant functional impairment and a low quality of life. Diagnosis remained a strong predictor of functional impairment after socio-demographic factors and physical illness were controlled for. Efforts are needed to eliminate the burden of mental disorders.