

## ALEXITHYMIA AND TRAIT ANXIETY LEVELS IN PATIENTS WITH PREMATURE CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE DOCUMENTED BY CORONARY ANGIOGRAPHY

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**Keywords.** Coronary artery disease, alexithymia, trait anxiety.

**Introduction.** Alexithymia is a personality construct characterized by the subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions in oneself. Trait anxiety is an enduring disposition to feel stress, worry and discomfort. Both of these personality characteristics have been associated with increased cardiovascular risk (Hernandez et al., 2014; Grabe et al., 2010).

**Aim.** To assess association of alexithymia and trait anxiety with presence of premature coronary artery disease (CAD).

**Materials and methods.** 52 patients with premature CAD were included in the prospective study. CAD was confirmed by coronary angiography in male and female patients aged below 55 years and 65 years, respectively. Control group included 15 male and female patients above the age of 55 and 65 with no significant stenosis in coronary angiography. Basic clinical and psychosocial data were acquired. Internationally validated Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) questionnaire and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) adapted in Latvian and Russian were used. Statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 23.0.

**Results.** Mean age of studied group was  $50.9 \pm 6.1$  years; 76.9% (n = 46) were male. Mean age of controls was  $68.5 \pm 7.6$  years; 40% (n = 6) were male.

Alexithymia was observed in 19.6% (n = 10) in studied group and 20.0% (n = 3) in control group, p = 0.973. Possible alexithymia was present in 15.7% (n = 8) in studied group and 26.7% (n = 4) in control group, p = 0.332. No statistically significant difference between groups was detected.

Mean score for trait anxiety was  $41.7 \pm 9.0$  in study group and  $38.8 \pm 9.0$  in control group. The difference was not statistically significant (p = 0.273). After weighting data for gender differences, STAI score for trait anxiety was statistically significantly higher in premature CAD group ( $44.0 \pm 9.8$  vs.  $38.1 \pm 9.2$ , p = 0.041).

**Conclusion.** In our patient cohort we did not observe a significant association of alexithymia with premature CAD. Higher trait anxiety level was observed for premature CAD patients after adjustment for gender differences between groups. Bias with psychosomatic status of selected control group of patients undergoing coronary angiography could interfere with study results. Further studies with larger patient sample sizes are warranted to assess association between psychoemotional status and premature CAD.