

P01-129

ANXIETY SYNDROME AND SOMATIC MORBIDITY IN AN ITALIAN ELDERLY POPULATION

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Aims: To evaluate anxiety syndrome prevalence and to investigate the association between anxiety and somatic morbidity in a population-based study of elderly: the "Faenza Project" (De Ronchi, 2005).

Methods: 6987 cognitively intact subjects living in the Faenza area (mean age 71,88 years; 59,2% women) underwent semi-structured interviews and were clinically assessed in order to evaluate somatic and mental health status (ICD-10 criteria). Multi-morbidity was defined as the presence of two or more somatic diseases (hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular, gastro-intestinal, endocrine diseases, psychiatric disorders, osteoporosis, Parkinson's disease (PD) and stroke). The association between anxiety and somatic morbidity was calculated by Logistic regression analysis estimating Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals (OR, 95%CI), adjusting for age, education, gender, marital status, socio-economic status, smoking habits and alcohol consumption.

Results: The prevalence of anxiety syndrome was 11,1% (8,6% women vs 2,5% men, $p < 0.001$). Taking into account possible confounders, anxiety syndrome was associated with depressive syndrome (OR,95%CI=4.55,3.73-5.54), osteoporosis (OR ,95%CI=1.37,1.13-1.65), Parkinson's disease (OR,95%CI=4.18,2.55-6.85) and multi-morbidity (OR,95%CI=1.75,1.46-2.10). When all these conditions were included simultaneously in the logistic model, however, only depressive syndrome and PD were still significantly associated with anxiety: OR,95%CI=4.10,3.22-5.23 and OR, 95%CI=3.02,1.73-5.28 respectively.

Conclusions: The well known association between depression and anxiety is confirmed in our elderly population independently of other medical factors. Furthermore, a strong association between PD and anxiety resulted independently of co-occurrence of depression.