

Psychosocial determinants of experiencing illness and self-assessment of quality of life in patients with Multiple Sclerosis

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Any chronic disease is a challenge both for the medical personnel such as the doctors, psychologists and therapists as well as for the patients. It involves identification of the mechanisms of disease development and the factors of particular importance for the patients in terms of quality of life. Therefore, it seems advisable to verify the relationship between the selected psychosocial factors (sex, education, marital status, disability and self-efficacy), self-assessment of quality of life and the mode of experiencing a chronic disease (assessment of its significance) among patients with Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis (RRMS) with respect to the received social support. Additionally, a typology of modes of experiencing the disease was formulated. For the purpose of a comparative analysis of the results, a reference group was formed according to the criterion of experiencing a chronic disease, i.e. type 2 diabetes.

Material and methods: The study was conducted on 118 patients with RRMS, including: 59 patients aged from 25 to 45 years ($M=36.37$; $SD=5.988$) and 59 patients aged 46 and older ($M=55.39$; $SD=6.060$). Women constituted 68.6% of the group. The level of disability was 0 – 6.5 (EDSS scale). The study was conducted with the use of: the Functional Assessment of MS questionnaire, version 4 (Polish standardisation by Kossakowska, 2004), the Disease-Related Appraisals Scale (by Janowski, Steuden, Kuryłowicz, Nieśpiałkowska-Steuden, 2009), Generalized Self-Efficacy (polish version by Schwarzer, Jerusalem, Juczyński 1998), the original interview questionnaire used to determine the level and the quality of the social support, and the Mini-Mental State Examination (polish standardisation by Stańczak, 2010) which was considered a screening instrument.

Results: A relationship was found between the sex, education, marital status, disability, self-efficacy and the mode of experiencing a disease (assessment of its significance). Additionally, a relationship between disability, self-efficacy and quality of life was established. The study has confirmed the importance of received social support for the modes of experiencing a disease (its significance), though a moderating effect in terms of the assessment of quality of life was not found among RRMS patients.

Conclusions: The analysis of the obtained results and the implications of the verified research hypothesis contribute considerably to theoretical findings on both psychosocial mechanisms of experiencing a chronic disease and the significance of social support as a considerable resource. The presented and documented empirical findings confirm the importance of the meaning assigned to a disease by a patient to the diagnostic-therapeutic process. These findings may prove helpful in establishing and implementing interventions directed to improve the quality of life of patients.

Key words: chronic disease, Multiple Sclerosis, assessment of the significance of a disease, quality of life, social support