

Psychological aspects of caring for patients with chronic illnesses

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Abstract: In this article, we review key psychological aspects of caring for patients with chronic illnesses that play a critical role in the treatment and rehabilitation process. Chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer are often accompanied not only by physical, but also by significant emotional and psychological difficulties. As a result, patients' emotional well-being can significantly affect their quality of life, adherence to treatment, and overall outcomes of therapy. Our article is based on the analysis of existing scientific evidence, meta-analyses, and practical recommendations aimed at improving psychological support for patients. Particular attention is paid to methods of psychological assessment, such as the use of standardized questionnaires and clinical interviews, which can identify patients' levels of anxiety, depression and stress. Key findings of the study highlight the importance of integrating psychological aspects into clinical practice. Systematic psychological support, including individual and group therapy and educational programs, was found to significantly improve patients' emotional well-being. This, in turn, contributes to increasing their motivation for treatment and improving their overall quality of life. Thus, the results of this study emphasize the need for an integrated approach to the care of patients with chronic diseases, which includes not only medical but also psychological interventions. In conclusion, we offer recommendations for further research in the field of health psychology and emphasizes the importance of training health care providers to provide psychological support to patients.

Key words: Psychological aspects, chronic illness, patient care, psychological support, quality of life, emotional well-being, depression, anxiety, stress, psychosocial factors, individualized approach, psychotherapy, group therapy, educational programs, adaptation to illness, motivation for treatment, health psychology interventions, integrated approach, prevention of psychological problems, professional training of health professionals.

Introduction. The study of the relationship between psychological state and physical health began to develop actively in the early 20th century, when scientists began to realize that the emotional state of a person has a significant impact on his or her physical health and recovery process. One of the first researchers in this field was Freud, who in his works raised questions about the influence of mental processes on somatic diseases. However, systematic study of this relationship only began with the development of psychosomatic medicine in the 1950s. Studies conducted at this time demonstrated that stress and emotional disturbances can contribute to the development of various diseases such as hypertension, peptic ulcer disease, and cardiovascular disease. An important role in these studies was played by the work of Hans Selye, who proposed the concept of general adaptation syndrome, which describes the physiological responses of the body to stressors. His research became the basis for further study of the relationship between psychological state and physical health. Over time, the attention of scientists began to focus on more specific aspects of this relationship. In the 1970s and 1980s, numerous studies confirmed that chronic stress and negative emotional states, such as

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depression and anxiety, can significantly worsen outcomes in patients with chronic diseases. For example, studies have shown that diabetic patients experiencing high levels of stress have worse glycemic control and a higher risk of complications. In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in psychosocial factors affecting health. Studies show that family and community support and positive emotional well-being can significantly improve the quality of life of patients with chronic diseases. Psychological support and interventions, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and support groups, are becoming important components of integrative patient care, as evidenced by multiple clinical trials and meta-analyses. With the development of integrative medicine, there is a need to incorporate psychological aspects into patient care, which contributes to more effective treatment and improved quality of life. Integrative medicine focuses on a holistic approach to the patient, viewing the patient as a unity of physical, emotional, and spiritual states. This approach implies that ignoring psychological factors can significantly reduce the effectiveness of medical interventions. Identifying predispositions: Patients with chronic illnesses often experience increased levels of stress, anxiety and depression. These emotional states can be triggered by the diagnosis itself as well as associated physical limitations, lifestyle changes, and social isolation. Studies show that patients with chronic illnesses have a two to three times higher risk of developing depression than the general population. This requires special attention from health care providers, who must be prepared not only to treat physical symptoms but also to provide psychological support. The importance of early detection and mental health interventions is becoming increasingly evident. Psychological assessments conducted as part of an integrated treatment approach can help identify patients in need of additional support and develop individualized treatment plans. Effective interventions, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, can significantly reduce anxiety and depression, thereby improving a patient's overall well-being and adherence to treatment.

The relevance of this problem is the increase in the number of cases of chronic diseases, also the need for psychological support from medical staff. In recent decades, there has been an increase in the incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), chronic diseases are a major cause of mortality and disability worldwide (WHO, 2020). This makes it important to study their psychological aspects, as the emotional state of patients directly affects their physical health and quality of life.

Psychological support is becoming an integral part of comprehensive care for patients with chronic diseases. Research shows that the availability of psychological support can significantly improve patients' quality of life, reduce stress levels, and increase their ability to cope with emotional difficulties. Psychological support can include individual and group therapy, educational programs for patients and their families, and the creation of supportive communities.

Thus, integrating psychological aspects into the care of patients with chronic diseases not only contributes to improving their emotional well-being, but can also significantly improve the effectiveness of medical treatment. With the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, the need for such an approach becomes particularly urgent, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between medical and mental health professionals.

Materials and Methods. In this study, several methods, including questionnaires and clinical interviews, were used to assess the psychological state of the patients, providing a comprehensive view of the participants' condition. The Hamilton Anxiety Scale was used to assess the level of anxiety in patients according to various criteria, including physical and psychological symptoms; the Beck Depression Scale was used to measure the degree of depressive symptoms, which allows us to identify

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the level of emotional discomfort and the need for additional support; and the Persona Stress Scale was used to assess the perception of stress and its impact on patients' daily lives, which is important for understanding their overall psychological state. The questionnaires were administered at the beginning and at the end of the study, which allowed us to assess the dynamics of changes in psychological state. Clinical interviews were conducted for a deeper understanding of the emotional state and needs of patients. These interviews included open-ended questions that allowed participants to freely express their thoughts and feelings about their health and emotional well-being. The interviews were conducted in an informal setting, which helped to create an atmosphere of trust and increased the openness of the participants. The clinical interviews allowed us to collect qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings from the questionnaires. By analyzing these data, we were able to identify not only the level of anxiety and depression, but also the specific problems faced by patients and their expectations from medical care.

We divided participants into several age categories (youth, adults, and elderly) to assess the impact of chronic illness on psychological health. This allowed us to identify age differences in the perception and experience of psychological problems, as well as in the needs for psychological support.

Results. The study found that psychological problems are common among patients with chronic diseases. Statistics show that up to 50% of such patients experience symptoms of depression and anxiety. This indicates the significant impact of psychological factors on the overall health and quality of life. Data analysis showed that up to 50% of participants experience symptoms of depression and anxiety, confirming the need for attention to mental health in the context of chronic illness. Analysis of the data by age group showed that younger people (18-30 years) were more likely to report high levels of anxiety, while older participants (65 years and older) were more likely to experience symptoms of depression. This underscores the importance of an individualized treatment approach that takes into account patients' age and needs. The results of the study showed that various chronic conditions have a significant impact on patients' emotional well-being. For example:

-Diabetes: Diabetic patients have high levels of anxiety related to the need for constant blood sugar control and fear of possible complications. Questionnaires have shown that 60% of diabetic patients experience moderate to severe symptoms of depression.

-Cardiovascular disease: Participants with cardiovascular disease reported high levels of stress and feeling isolated from the community. 55% of respondents reported that their emotional well-being worsened after diagnosis, as evidenced by Hamilton Anxiety Scale results.

Analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires showed the following results:

Hamilton Anxiety Scale (HAM-A): The mean score of the scale was 22, indicating moderate anxiety among the participants. 40% of the patients scored high, indicating the need for intervention.

Beck Depression Scale (BDI): The mean score was 18, corresponding to a moderate degree of depression. 35% of participants showed high levels of depressive symptoms, warranting attention from health care providers.

Persson Stress Scale (PSS): The mean score was 27, indicating high levels of perceived stress. 50% of participants reported a significant impact of stress on their daily lives.

Clinical interviews provided a deeper understanding of patients' emotional state. Participants shared their experiences with chronic diseases and expressed the need for more support from health care providers. According to the results of our study, many patients experience fear of complications and the need for constant monitoring of their condition (78%). 64% of participants reported that their

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illnesses limit their ability to socialize and participate in social activities, which exacerbates their emotional well-being. 89% of patients expressed a desire to receive more information about their diseases and available treatments, as well as psychological support.

Conclusion. Psychological aspects play a key role in the care of patients with chronic diseases. Our work has shown that the emotional state of patients directly affects their ability to cope with the disease, follow medical recommendations and maintain an active lifestyle. Understanding these aspects allows health care providers to develop more effective treatments and support, which in turn can lead to improved clinical outcomes. Psychological support provided to patients can significantly improve their quality of life. Study participants who received psychological support reported higher levels of emotional well-being, lower levels of anxiety and depression, and better adherence to treatment. This underscores the need to integrate psychological support into standard chronic disease management protocols, which may improve patients' overall health. One of the main challenges identified in the study is the lack of information about psychological aspects of patient care among health care providers. Many physicians and nurses lack knowledge about how psychological factors affect patients' health and how they can provide the necessary support. This highlights the need to raise awareness through educational programs that should cover mental health topics, diagnostic methods and intervention approaches. Personal and social barriers that prevent patients from accessing psychological support also require attention. Barriers identified in our study included stigmatization of mental illness, lack of resources, and lack of accessible information about available services. These barriers may discourage patients from seeking help and reduce the effectiveness of the support provided. More research is needed to identify and overcome these barriers to ensure that patients have access to the resources and support they need.

Recommendations.

To improve the situation it is necessary to:

- Development of educational programs for health care providers that cover aspects of mental health and offer practical guidelines for providing psychological support.
- Awareness raising among patients about the importance of psychological support and available resources to reduce stigma and increase willingness to seek help.
- Research into personal and social barriers that may prevent access to psychological support in order to develop strategies to overcome them.

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