

# ASSESSMENT THE CURRENT STATUS OF IN-PATIENTS PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NEEDS AT INTERNAL MEDICINE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HOSPITAL FOR TROPICAL DISEASES

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The burden of disease includes physical symptoms and psychological stress. Patients who receive psychological support often have better treatment outcomes. Therefore, medical facilities must proactively assess the psychosocial needs of patients to develop comprehensive intervention programs.

*Objectives:* To assess the current status of psychosocial support needs of inpatients at the Department of Internal Medicine, National Hospital for Tropical Diseases for 3 months (August-October 2024).

*Subjects and methods:* Cross-sectional descriptive study, selecting all patients who met the criteria with a convenient sampling method.

*Results:* 309 patients who met the criteria were recruited, with an average age of  $58,7 \pm 18,1$ ; 54,4% were male; 86,7% had health insurance. The proportion of patients with depression and anxiety was 23,3% and 12%, respectively. Only a small proportion of patients (3%) wanted to receive psychosocial support, with a higher proportion of women than men.

*Conclusions:* Although the proportion of patients with depression and anxiety was quite high, only a small proportion wanted to receive psychosocial support, indicating the need to increase patients' awareness of the need for psychosocial support.

**Keywords:** Social psychology, depression, anxiety, support needs.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an integral part of health definition (WHO, 2001). In the context of modern society, mental health is increasingly recognized as one of the indispensable factors contributing to the quality of life. However, the prevalence of mental disorders continues to increase worldwide, with an estimated 13.0% of the global population suffering from mild depression before the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

When a patient is diagnosed with a disease, the burden of illness includes not only the physical symptoms but also psychological stress such as emotional changes, anxiety about the disease, treatment costs, and changes in daily life. In Vietnam, studies related to mental disorders in the chronic respiratory patients group showed that the rates of anxiety and depression were 21,7% and 41,3%, respectively<sup>2</sup>. In another study conducted on a group of chronic respiratory patients at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates of anxiety and depression were 30,1% and 47,9%, respectively<sup>3</sup>. The problem is that if patients are not aware of the psychological difficulties they are facing, they often do not proactively look for support<sup>7</sup>. Reports from Johns Hopkins University, USA also emphasize that patients receiving psychological support often have better treatment outcomes, due to reduced depressive symptoms and increased

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*Date of submission:* November 05, 2024

*Date of reviewed completion:* November 15, 2024

*Accepted date for publication:* November 25, 2024

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compliance with medical guidelines<sup>8</sup>. This requires medical facilities to be more proactive in assessing patients' psychosocial needs, creating the premise for building comprehensive intervention programs.

This survey was conducted with the aim of assessing the current situation of psychosocial support needs of inpatients at the Department of Internal Medicine, National Hospital for Tropical Diseases, thereby providing a basis for developing and designing social work activities to raise patients' awareness of mental health, contributing to improving the effectiveness of comprehensive medical care at the hospital.

## SUBJECTS AND METHODS

**Subjects:** Inclusion criteria: All in-patients at Department of Internal Medicine - National Hospital for Tropical Diseases during the study period, agreed to participate in the psychosocial needs assessment.

**Exclusion criteria:** Patients being treated for psychiatric disorders.

**Research time and place:** From August to October 2024 at Department of Internal Medicine - National Hospital for Tropical Diseases.

**Study design and sample size:** Cross-sectional descriptive study, selecting all suitable patients with convenience sampling.

**Research content:** Data were collected by interview method with a standardized questionnaire for participants to fill out themselves. The study subjects were considered for their need for psychosocial support based on the following scales: PQH-9 Depression Scale (Patient Questionnaire Health - 9) to assess the patient's level of depression with a total score of 27, in which 0 - 4: no depression, 5 - 27: depression. GAD-7 (General Anxiety Disorder-7) scale to assess anxiety disorders with a total score of 21, in which 0 - 4: no anxiety, 5 - 21: anxiety.

Research data were analyzed using SPSS22.0 software with applied algorithms.

## RESULTS

309 patients who met the criteria were recruited into the study.

**Table 1.** General characteristics of the study group

Index		No. (n = 66)	%
Gender	Male	169	54.7
	Female	140	45.3
Age	< 20	5	1.6
	20 - < 40	53	17.2
	40 - < 60	83	26.9
	60 - < 80	131	42.4
	≥ 80	37	12.0
	Average	58.7 ± 18.1	
Health insurance	Yes	Right route	47.9
		Wrong route	38.8
	No	41	13.3

**Comments:** Males accounted for a higher proportion than females. The most common age was 60 years and older (54.4%). The majority of patients had health insurance (86.7%).

**Table 2.** Distribution of patients according to PHQ 9 depression scale

Score	n (n = 309)	%
0 - 4 mark: Normal	237	76.7
5 - 9 mark: Minimal depression	60	19.4
10 - 14 mark: Mild depression	9	2.9
15 - 19 mark: Moderate depression	2	0.6
20 - 27 mark: Severe depression	1	0.3

**Comments:** The prevalence of depression was 23.3%, of which 22.3% were minimal, mild to moderate, and 0.3% were severe.

**Table 3.** Distribution of patients according to GAD-7 anxiety disorder scale

Score	n (n = 309)	%
0 - 4 mark: No anxiety	272	88.0
5 - 9 mark: Mild anxiety	28	9.1
10 - 14 mark: Moderate anxiety	6	1.9
15 - 21 mark: Severe anxiety	3	1.0

**Comments:** The rate of patients with anxiety disorders was 12%, of which mild anxiety disorders were 9% and moderate and severe anxiety disorders were 3%.

**Table 4.** Psychosocial support needs

Support needs	n (n = 309)	Male (n,%)	Female (n,%)
Disagree	300 (97.0)	164 (97)	136 (97.0)
Agree	9 (3.0)	5 (3)	4 (3.0)

**Comments:** Only 3% of patients desired psychosocial support, and the rates were similar in both men and women.

**Table 5.** Level of acceptance of psychosocial support by at-risk groups

Score		n (%)	Male (n,%)	Female (n,%)
Depression (n = 72)	Agree	6 (8.3)	2 (2.8)	4 (5.6)
	Disagree	66 (91.7)	34 (47.2)	32 (44.4)
Anxiety (n = 37)	Agree	6 (16.0)	2 (5.0)	4 (11,0)
	Disagree	31 (84.0)	16 (43.0)	15 (41,0)

**Comments:** Of the 72 patients with signs of depression and mild to severe depression requiring psychological support, only 8.3% agreed to receive psychosocial support, with a higher proportion of women than men (5.6% vs. 2.8%). Of the 37 patients with anxiety, only 16% agreed to receive support, with a higher proportion of women than men (11% vs. 5%).

**Table 6.** Differentiating factors between patient groups

Factors (n = 309)		Depression		p	Anxiety		p
		Yes (n,%)	No (n,%)		Yes (n,%)	No (n,%)	
Age	< 20	1 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	0.372	0 (0,0)	5 (100)	0.176
	20 - < 40	13 (24.5)	40 (75.5)		11 (20.8)	42 (79.2)	
	40 - < 60	15 (19.1)	68 (81.9)		11 (13.3)	72 (86.7)	
	60 - < 80	30 (22.9)	101 (77.1)		11 (8.4)	120 (91.6)	
	≥ 80	13 (64.9)	24 (35.1)		4 (89.2)	33 (10.8)	
Gender	Male	36 (21.3)	133 (78.7)	0.361	18 (10.7)	151 (89.3)	0.431
	Female	36 (25.7)	104 (74.3)		4 (10.8)	33 (89.2)	
Health insurance	Right route	33 (22.3)	115 (77.7)	0,203	15 (10.1)	133 (88.9)	0.468
	Wrong route	25 (20.8)	95 (79.2)		0 (0.0)	5 (100)	
	No health insurance	14 (34.1)	27 (65.9)		11 (20.8)	42 (79.2)	

**Comments:** There were no statistically significant differences in age, gender, and health insurance status between patients with or without depression or with or without anxiety.

## DISCUSSIONS

In our study, although 23.3% patients had signs of depression and 12% had anxiety disorders, only 3% expressed a desire for psychosocial support. Of 72 patients who came for treatment and needed psychological support (with signs of mild to severe depression), only 8.3% wanted to receive support. A study has shown that 21.7% of Vietnamese adolescents have mental health problems, but only 8.4% of them have access to support services. The main reason is attributed to lack of awareness and social stigma about these problems<sup>8</sup>. This shows a large gap between the actual need and awareness of mental health care of patients, leading to low rates of access to psychosocial services.

Gender has been found to be a significant predictor of mental health problems in a large number of studies<sup>4,5,6</sup>. In one study, women were found to be 3.4 times more likely to suffer from depression,<sup>3,4</sup> times more likely to suffer from anxiety, and 4.5 times more likely to suffer from stress than men<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, Al Banna et al. reported that male participants were less vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and depression<sup>4</sup>.

In our study, the rate of depression in women (25.7%) was higher than that in men (21.3%) and the rate of anxiety disorders in women (13.6%) was also higher than that in men (10.7%), indicating that women are more prone to anxiety and psychological vulnerability to health problems. Women are also more willing to access psychosocial support than men, with the rate of consent for support for depression and anxiety in women being 5.6% and 11%, respectively, and in men being 2.8% and 5%. There were no statistically significant differences in age, gender, and health insurance status between patients with or without depression or with or without anxiety.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although the proportion of patients with depression (23.3%) and anxiety (12%) was quite high, only a small proportion (3%) expressed a desire to receive psychosocial support. There was a gender difference in willingness to access psychosocial support, with women being more willing to seek support than men in both the depression and anxiety groups.

Research shows that the need for psychosocial support is not fully recognized. Designing psychosocial support programs and raising awareness among patients is necessary to ensure comprehensive treatment effectiveness.

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