Mood and anxiety disorders in patients with a brain tumor

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Jazz Classrooms I & II
Overview

- What has the research of depression & anxiety in people with brain tumors shown
- What are the common symptoms of mood and anxiety disorders
- What causes these symptoms
- How can these symptoms be treated
Rates of depression & Anxiety

• Approximately 33% of patients with brain tumors will have depression
  • Location and type of tumor may play a role in this

• Approximately 25% of patients with brain tumors will have anxiety
Research findings

• Depression is the most common post-operative side effect after having surgery for a brain tumor
Depression in Cancer patients

- Many depressed patients have a hard time keeping the treatment schedules & other recommendations
- Longer hospital stays
- Poor quality of life
- Reduced capacity to cope with pain
Depression in Cancer Patients

• Often missed during the acute anticancer treatment phase
• Frequently, the level of depression is underestimated by healthcare providers
  • Inadequate treatment
  • Response to treatment not assessed
If depression is treated

- Improved quality of life
- Decrease risk of suicide
- Improve treatment compliance
- Shorten hospital stays
Diagnosing Depression

• Can be difficult to diagnose because of overlap in symptoms
  • Confusion
  • Poor concentration
  • Lack of appetite
  • Fatigue
  • Memory loss
  • Changes in sleeping pattern
The Early Days of Diagnosis

• Shock
  • "I didn't really feel bad“

• Worry
  • "What does the future hold?”

• Confusion
  • "What does this mean?“

• Betrayal
  • "How could my body have failed me?"
After the Diagnosis has “sunk in”

• Able to cope with things the way you used to
• Family members may have a harder time emotionally during this period
• But sometimes, feeling like you can't move on and feeling depressed
Sadness

• Normal, expectable response to the many adverse effects of cancer
  • Change in bodily appearance
  • Pain
  • Limitations at work/pleasurable activities
  • Perceived alteration in the anticipated life expectancy

Changes to family life, intimate relationships, social relationships and activities
Difference between sadness and depression

• Sadness
  • Normal reaction
  • Clear trigger
  • Does not last very long
  • No significant impairment

• Depression
  • Medical illness
  • Sometimes no trigger
  • Lasts much longer
  • Significant problems
When is it depression?

• 2 weeks or longer of depressed mood or not enjoying things like you used to along with
  • Sleep disturbance
  • Decreased interests
  • Feelings of guilt
  • Fatigue
  • Impaired concentration
  • Change in appetite
  • Feeling slowed or speed up internally
  • Thoughts of death or suicide
More specific depression symptoms

- Social withdrawal
- Anhedonia
- Ruminations
- Tearfulness
- Dysphoric mood
- Feeling hopeless & helpless
- Poor self esteem & feeling worthless
- Suicidality
Reasons why depression is missed

- Patient related factors
  - Stigma
  - Do not want to appear weak
  - Fear of abandonment

- Physician related factors
  - Stigma/lack of comfort
  - Belief that depression is “normal”
  - Uncertainty of diagnosis and treatment
  - Time
Anxiety

• Normal response to threat, uncertainty and loss of control

• Very common in cancer patients
  • Especially after initial diagnosis & at “crisis points”
  • Intrusive thoughts, insomnia, anorexia

• Can be mimicked by meds, pain or other medical problems
  • Antiemetics, pulmonary embolus, delirium
Factors that lead to anxiety

- Uncertainty
- Family
- Health Burden
- Worry about long-term effects of treatment
- Changes in physical appearance
- Medical System
- Finances
What causes mood or anxiety disorders?

- Stress related to diagnosis and treatment
- Medications
- General medical condition
- Recurrence of a preexisting depressive disorder
Steroids

- Sleep changes
- Energy
- Mood swings
  - Depression
  - Mania
- Psychosis
Chemotherapy

- Temodar
- CCNU
Radiation

- Fatigue
- Low mood
Personality changes

• Most common with tumors in the frontal lobes
  • Change in motivation
  • Irritability
Fatigue

• Cancer related fatigue is defined as a persistent symptom
  • Subjective feeling of tiredness or exhaustion
  • Related to cancer or its treatment
  • Not proportional to recently performed activity
  • Can interfere with the usual functional capacity
Treatment

• Pharmacologic interventions
• Psychotherapy
  • Healthy coping strategies
  • Cognitive behavioral therapy
Pharmacologic Interventions

- SSRIs
  - Fluoxetine, sertraline, citalopram, escitalopram, paroxetine

- SNRI
  - Venlafaxine,

- Others - mirtazipine
Pharmacologic Interventions

• Mood stabilizers
  • Often are also antiepileptic medications
• Antipsychotics
Biologic Interventions

- Stopping any medications that have psychiatric side effects
- Checking certain labs
  - TSH
Pharmacologic Interventions

- Risk of drug-drug interactions
- Side effects
  - Seizure risk
Psychotherapy

• Underutilized often
• Meeting with a therapist
  • Could be weekly – monthly
  • Certain types of psychotherapy
• Time intensive
In summary

• Mood and anxiety disorders are very common in people with brain tumors
• This can significantly affect quality of life
• There is treatment that is effective
• If you have symptoms – let your healthcare team know!
Questions?