PSYCHIATRIC MORBIDITY IN PATIENTS ATTENDING MEDICAL OPD

M. S. BHATIA
BALAKRISHNA
N. K. DHAR
NEENA BOHRA
HEMLATA GUPTA
S. C. MALIK

SUMMARY

Psychiatric morbidity was analysed in 5,000 female patients who attended medical OPD from July 1985 to July 1986. The psychiatric illnesses were found in 932 patients (18.42%). The commonest age to have psychiatric illness was 21-30 years (58.8%), and neuroses constituted the most common psychiatric diagnosis (44.6%). Schizophrenia was the least common psychiatric illness (3.2%) in patients attending medical OPD.

Introduction

In a Medical OPD to differentiate the patients suffering from purely organic illness, purely psychiatric illness and from mixed psychiatric-organic illness may be difficult. Physicians treating patients in Medical OPD concentrate more on organic illnesses and pay less attention towards psychiatric illness while patients attending psychiatry OPD get treatment for psychiatric ailment only. Psychiatric morbidity in patients attending medical OPD has a bearing on the management of these patients and if we know its prevalence many exhaustive investigations can be avoided. Few studies have been conducted to know psychiatric morbidity in a medical OPD. We have conducted a study in 5,000 female patients attending the medical OPD of SK Hospital, Delhi.

Material and Methods

5,000 female patients age ranging 15 to 70 years attending Medical OPD of Smt. Sucheta Kriplani Hospital were randomly taken for study. This study was conducted from July 1985 to July 1986. All the patients included in this study were examined by a psychiatrist and a physician in the medical OPD. The patients found to be suffering from any psychiatric illness were referred to another group of psychiatrists to have an unbiased opinion regarding diagnosis.

The patients were screened by using standardized PGI health questionnaire N-2. The patients having high neuroticism (scoring more than 9 on scale) were interviewed in detail and the diagnosis was made according to ICD-9 (WHO 1975). The physical illnesses were ruled out in all functional psychiatric cases by performing relevant investigations (routine urine, blood and stool examination, Endoscopy etc).

For analysis of results, the patients were divided into 6 groups according to age, 15-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-above.
Results

Out of 5,000 female patients who attended Medical OPD, 932 (18.42%) showed some form of psychiatric illness. The physician could diagnose psychiatric illness in much lesser number of cases (about 8%). The diagnosis was more probable in psychotic cases.

Table 1 shows the age distribution and most patients who had psychiatric illness fell in the age group of 25-30 years (38.8%). The psychiatric illness were less often found in 15-20 years age group (3.2%).

Table 2 shows the different types of psychiatric illnesses according to I.C.D.-9. Neurosis was the most common psychiatric illness (44.6%). This was followed by physical disorder presumably of psychogenic origin (20.6%). Schizophrenia was found only in 3.2% of cases of psychiatric illnesses.

Table 3 shows the different types of neurosis. Neurotic depression (36.1%) was the commonest disorder followed by Hysterical neurosis (28.5%). Obsessive compulsive neurosis was seen in 1.2 percent of neurotic disorders.

Table 4 shows the common presenting symptoms in patients coming to the medical OPD.
Table 5 shows distribution of patients according to PGI-HQ N-2 scores.

Table 5
Distribution of patients according to N-2 score.

| Score Range | No. of patients(N=932) |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 9-12        | 416 (44.6)             |
| 13-16       | 325 (34.9)             |
| 17-20       | 114 (12.1)             |
| 21-24       | 59 (6.3)               |
| 25 & above  | 18 (2.1)               |

Discussion

So far the psychiatric morbidity had been reported among the referral cases (Dubey 1964, Prabhakaran 1968, Parekh, 1968, Gautam et al. 1977, Chatterjee 1977). We have conducted this study directly among those patients who were attending medical OPD.

In our study, the psychiatric morbidity was 18.42% in female patients attending medical OPD. On the contrary, different workers found psychiatric morbidity, which was quite variable – Peterson et al (1956) – 5.3%, Locke et al (1966) – 14.6%, Locke et al (1967) – 7.9%. These percentages are very low in comparison to our results. On the other hand, Wig et al (1979) found psychiatric morbidity in 28.6% of cases.

The psychiatric illnesses were commonest in 21-30 years of age. This could be understood because at this stage, most of the females go into married life and try to settle down in a new family atmosphere. Similar results were obtained by Chatterjee et al (1977) and Anderson (1962). Neuroses were the commonest psychiatric illnesses found in 28.6% of cases.

The possible reason, for neuroses being the commonest in medical OPD is because it manifests through somatic complaints. Chatterjee et al (1977) noted 40% cases of neuroses attending medical clinics while Prabhakaran (1968). Parekh et al (1969) reported the prevalence of neuroses as 28.7% and 11% respectively. Other major contributors were physical disturbance of psychogenic origin in 20.6%, Psychosis associated with other physical illness in 9.1%, affective psychosis in 8.5% and organic psychosis in 7.2% in our study.

Neurotic depression was the commonest (36.1%) type of neuroses (Table 4). This is compatible with the observations made by Gautam (1976), Usha Naik (1979) and Wig et al (1979).

This study highlights the different types of psychiatric illnesses found in female patients attending medical OPD, thus reflects a great contribution of Psychiatrist's opinion in management of the patients attending medical OPD. The awareness of these psychiatric illnesses and their morbidity will help of the physicians to a great extent in management of these cases.

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