

Psychosocial Variables in Coronary Heart Disease

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Annotation: The study of the connection between psychosocial variables and the progression of coronary heart disease (CHD) is the focus of this article. Patients with coronary artery disease are examined for social isolation, anxiety, and depression. The necessity of determining the psychological aspects that patients with coronary artery disease have in order to address them and enhance their quality of life and prognosis.

Keywords: coronary heart disease, depression, psychosocial factors, anxiety.

Despite significant advances in diagnostics and treatment, coronary heart disease (CHD) remains the main cause of death and disability, which determines the relevance of studying this pathology [1]. Risk factors such as smoking, arterial hypertension (AH), dyslipidemia, etc. are of great importance in the etiology of CHD [2–4]. At the same time, in recent years, more and more attention has been paid to psychological factors, such as anxiety, social isolation and the level of social support, depression, which affect not only the course of coronary heart disease, but also the behavioral characteristics of patients with this pathology, as well as the quality of life of this category of patients [5, 6]. The increase in psychosocial stress in the population is accompanied by an increase in the level of emotional tension. The prevalence of anxiety disorders in the population, according to various authors, ranges from 3 to 30%. Anxiety increases after mental trauma, acute and chronic somatic diseases, and neuropsychiatric diseases. Thus, the severity of anxiety and the level of anxiety, reflecting the degree of an individual's ill-being, can be a kind of marker of chronic psychological stress [7].

It has been shown that anxiety and depressive disorders are independent risk factors for hypertension and coronary heart disease [8]. According to epidemiological studies, almost every fifth patient with coronary heart disease suffers from depression [9, 10]. It should be taken into account that only 30% of patients inform their doctor about their psychological problems that lead them to depression; most patients complain of physical discomfort (hidden, alexithymic depression) [11, 12]. In addition to the direct negative impact of depression on the course and prognosis of coronary heart disease, there is also an inverse relationship between coronary heart

disease and affective disorders of the depressive circle - the development and progression of "vascular" depression in patients with "active atherosclerosis" [13]. The role of anxiety-depressive disorder as a predictor of cardiovascular catastrophe has been shown, which is more pronounced in patients with arrhythmia, as well as in elderly patients with coronary heart disease. Thus, with diagnosed depression in a 70-year-old man, the probability of a cardiovascular catastrophe is 2 times higher than in a man of the same age without depression [14].

In addition, it should be noted that the combination of coronary heart disease and depression increases the economic burden on the healthcare system. Since depression in cardiac patients is often not diagnosed, the patient is treated for coronary heart disease, and depression remains in the shadows. As a result, patients continue to be bothered by non-specific symptoms, they visit doctors more often, call an ambulance more often, and are hospitalized more often [15, 16].

It is important to take into account the patient's psychological reaction to the disease. The very awareness of the fact that he has developed a disease causes the patient to feel anxious, fear for his health, and irritability. This condition is aggravated by the need to stay in the hospital, difficulty concentrating, and uncertainty about the future. At the same time, pain in the heart area with coronary heart disease often causes neurosis-like symptoms and anxiety-depressive syndromes [17]. When planning psychological correction for patients with coronary heart disease, various factors should be taken into account, including: gender characteristics, age, concomitant pathology, social environment, level of anxiety, depression, and cognitive sphere characteristics. Thus, it has been shown that women have a higher level of anxiety, which requires appropriate therapeutic approaches [18].

Research on the impact of low social support on the course of coronary heart disease remains relevant. Thus, in a meta-analysis by N.K. Valtorta et al. (2015), an assessment was made of the association of social isolation with the incidence of coronary heart disease and stroke. Data were analyzed in 16 electronic databases, including MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL Plus, PsycINFO, ASSIA, Web of Science, Cochrane Library, HMIC, ETHOS, NDLTD, etc., included in the analysis of longitudinal studies [19]. It was shown that the prevalence of loneliness or social isolation varied from 2.8 to 77.2%. Among the 35,925 respondents included in the analysis, 4,628 cases of coronary heart disease and 3,002 strokes were recorded. The results of the study record an increase in the risk of coronary heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32% in socially isolated individuals who report a deep sense of loneliness and confirm that a lack of social relationships is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke [19].

In another multicenter study, R.B. Case et al. (1992) examined whether divorce or living alone were independent predictors of the risk of a subsequent major cardiac event after myocardial infarction (MI) in acute care and academic hospitals in the United States and Canada [20]. Patients aged 25 to 75 years and without other serious diseases were prospectively enrolled within 3–15 days after acute MI and were followed for 1–4 years (mean 2.1 years), 967 patients were followed for 1.1 years, and 530 patients were followed for 2.2 years. It was shown that the recurrence rate of cardiac events after 6 months was 15.8% in the unmarried group of patients versus 8.8% in the married group. Living alone has been found to be an independent risk factor [20]. The coping strategies that people use to cope with stress, adapt to difficult situations, and manage chronic illnesses and symptoms are defined as coping strategies and coping behavior. In turn, coping strategies are classified into adaptive (constructive strategies of cooperation), acceptance of social support, and maladaptive (strategies of avoiding the problem) [21].

In the study by H. Roohafza et al. (2012) the relationship between adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies of survival and the progression of chronic stable angina was assessed. The average age of 224 respondents was 55.0 ± 10.4 years, of which 69.6% were men; 78 patients were hospitalized with acute coronary syndrome, and 146 with chronic stable angina and

participated as a control group. After adjustment for age, gender and traditional risk factors for coronary heart disease, the frequency of recurrent cardiac events was 5 times higher in the group living without social support compared to the group living using adaptive coping strategies. It is concluded that adaptive "coping strategies" and a high level of social support can contribute to the prevention of acute coronary events in patients suffering from chronic coronary heart disease [22].

Another example of the positive impact of an adaptive coping strategy is the study by M. Ziarko et al. (2015), in which the study group included patients with coronary heart disease, type 1 diabetes mellitus, and rheumatoid arthritis. 159 patients came from urban areas, 176 from rural areas. All patients filled out questionnaires on life satisfaction, depression severity, coping strategies, self-efficacy, social support, and a sense of coherence [23]. Analysis of the results showed that patients from rural areas were characterized by a lower level of depression. Predictors of life satisfaction included the following groups of indicators: self-efficacy, social support, and two coping strategies in the form of turning to religion and self-sufficiency in a household plot. It was found that rural and urban differences in the use of coping strategies may be associated with differences in the environment and lifestyle. Patients with coronary heart disease, type 1 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis in urban areas have been found to have a higher risk of developing depression [23]

Emotional support and survival after myocardial infarction in the elderly was studied in another prospective population-based study by L.F. Berkman et al. (1992). In two hospitals in New Haven County, Connecticut, USA, the survival of elderly patients hospitalized for acute MI who had emotional support was compared with the survival of patients who did not have such support, while controlling for disease severity, functional status, and comorbidity [24]. The study included 100 men and 94 women aged 65 years and older, hospitalized for acute MI, and were followed for 6 years. Of the 194 patients, 76 (39%) died in the first 6 months after MI. In multiple logistic regression analysis, the absence of emotional support was significantly associated with mortality at 6 months after controlling for MI severity, comorbidities, risk factors such as smoking and hypertension, and sociodemographic factors. When emotional support was assessed before the onset of MI, it was independently associated with the risk of death at 6 months [24].

Thus, some psychosocial factors, such as low socioeconomic status, insufficient social support, stress at work and in the family, anxiety and depression, are independent risk factors for the development of cardiovascular diseases, such as coronary heart disease, and worsen the prognosis of these patients. In the absence of these factors, the risk of development decreases, and the prognosis improves [25].

The influence of psychosocial factors on the course of coronary heart disease can be divided into two main ways. On the one hand, they significantly worsen patients' adherence to treatment, hinder efforts to improve lifestyle, reduce the quality of life of patients, increase the risk of disability and health care costs [26]. On the other hand, possible pathophysiological mechanisms by which the influence of psychoemotional factors on the course of coronary heart disease may be realized may include increased sympathetic activity (or decreased parasympathetic activity) of the autonomic nervous system, decreased heart rate variability, activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal system, endothelial dysfunction, increased blood clotting, stress-induced myocardial ischemia, increased levels of inflammation biomarkers, etc. [26].

However, psychosocial factors may also be closely associated with each other. For example, individuals with low socioeconomic status are more likely to have low social support, hostility, and depressive symptoms. According to the INTERHEART study [27], a cluster of psychosocial risk factors (low social support, depression, and stress at work and in the family) increases the risk of developing MI (relative risk 3.5 in women and 2.5 in men).

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