

Medication Side Effects: Implications on the Mental Health and Adherence Behaviour of Patients with Hypertension

Authors : Irene Kretchy, Frances Owusu-Daaku, Samuel Danquah

Abstract : Hypertension is the leading risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, and a major cause of death and disability worldwide. This study examined whether psychosocial variables influenced patients' perception and experience of side effects of their medicines, how they coped with these experiences and the impact on mental health and medication adherence to conventional hypertension therapies. **Methods:** A hospital-based mixed methods study, using quantitative and qualitative approaches was conducted on hypertensive patients. Participants were asked about side effects, medication adherence, common psychological symptoms, and coping mechanisms with the aid of standard questionnaires. Information from the quantitative phase was analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The interviews from the qualitative study were audio-taped with a digital audio recorder, manually transcribed and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The themes originated from participant interviews a posteriori. **Results:** The experiences of side effects - such as palpitations, frequent urination, recurrent bouts of hunger, erectile dysfunction, dizziness, cough, physical exhaustion - were categorized as no/low (39.75%), moderate (53.0%) and high (7.25%). Significant relationships between depression ($\chi^2 = 24.21$, $P < 0.0001$), anxiety ($\chi^2 = 42.33$, $P < 0.0001$), stress ($\chi^2 = 39.73$, $P < 0.0001$) and side effects were observed. A logistic regression model using the adjusted results for this association are reported - depression [OR = 1.9 (1.03 - 3.57), $p = 0.04$], anxiety [OR = 1.5 (1.22 - 1.77), $p = < 0.001$], and stress [OR = 1.3 (1.02 - 1.71), $p = 0.04$]. Side effects significantly increased the probability of individuals to be non-adherent [OR = 4.84 (95% CI 1.07 - 1.85), $p = 0.04$] with social factors, media influences and attitudes of primary caregivers further explaining this relationship. The personal adoption of medication modifying strategies, espousing the use of complementary and alternative treatments, and interventions made by clinicians were the main forms of coping with side effects. **Conclusions:** Results from this study show that contrary to a biomedical approach, the experience of side effects has biological, social and psychological interrelations. The result offers more support for the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to healthcare where all forms of expertise are incorporated into health provision and patient care. Additionally, medication side effects should be considered as a possible cause of non-adherence among hypertensive patients, thus addressing this problem from a Biopsychosocial perspective in any intervention may improve adherence and invariably control blood pressure.

Keywords : biopsychosocial, hypertension, medication adherence, psychological disorders

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