

## CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

### SELF-CARE PROCESS IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE: OBSERVATIONAL STUDY ON OUTPATIENTS' PATHWAY

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#### Abstract

Background. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a chronic non-communicable illness that causes more than half of all deaths across Europe. 80% of premature heart disease and stroke is preventable by effective measures availability for people at high risk. However, many such interventions are not being implemented and managed by patients. Managing such illness requires mastering self-care. Objective.

Aim of our study was to identify predictive factors of illness management by evaluating emotional characteristics, emotion regulation, and self-care process in young CVD outpatients. Methods. An observational study was conducted. 61 patients, age 18–75 years (M 56.4 ± sd 12.0), diagnosed with CVD participated in the study. The psychological battery was administered during clinical follow-up: Self Care of Chronic Illness Inventory, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21, World Health Organization Quality of Life – Bref, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. Results. The sample showed mild Anxiety and Stress degree, low Self-care, Social relationship, and emotional Clarity. First, participants were distributed into two groups by median age: Young (Y) and Old (O). Statistical analysis showed significant lower Psychological health ( $p = 0.03$ ) and higher Non acceptance of emotional responses ( $p = 0.02$ ) in O group. Then, participants were distributed in two groups by timing from CVD diagnosis: Early Disease (ED) and Long Disease (LD). One Way ANOVA showed lower emotional Awareness ( $p=0.03$ ) in LD group. Controlling for diagnosis timing, negative Pearson's correlations emerged between difficulties in emotion regulation domains and self-care monitoring, self-efficacy and QoL. Conclusions. Poor adherence to CVD pharmacological therapy could be addressed by identifying the emotional characteristics, subjective emotion ability, and self-care process of patients who are or may be at risk of non-persistence. The psychological screening and tailored psychological support on these predictive factors may result in clinical benefits.

**Keywords:** Cardiovascular disease, self-care behaviours, quality of life, psychological dimensions.

### WHAT COMPONENTS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED BY WORKING WITH A COUPLE TO INCREASE THEIR RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND THEIR WELL-BEING?

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#### Abstract

There are many schools of couple therapy, but none has emerged yet that would clearly dominate the rest. Therefore, it is extremely important to constantly search for new therapeutic practices and verify them in empirical research. The purpose of this study was to check the link between women's self-esteem and their satisfaction in a relationship and well-being. Attempts have also been made to verify if there is a correlation between relationship satisfaction and well-being, and with the components of love: intimacy, passion and commitment (IPC). There were 116 women, aged 19 to 45, in a heterosexual, romantic relationship who participated in the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used to identify the phases of the relationship, as well as Polish adaptations of tools measuring self-esteem, life and relationship satisfaction. The results indicate a positive correlation between the level of women's self-esteem and their well-being (strong) and relationship satisfaction (moderate). Results confirming a positive correlation between women's relationship and life satisfaction and strong positive correlations between love

components and relationship satisfaction were also obtained. Moderate correlations between self-esteem and its subscales were also established: self-liking and a self-competence with intimacy. There was also a positive correlation of self-acceptance with the sum of the components of love as well as of passion and intimacy with well-being. Additionally, a positive relationship was found between self-esteem and self-acceptance subscale and life satisfaction. The data from regression analysis showed that the predictors of life satisfaction are self-esteem, relationship satisfaction and the sum of the love components. The results of this study contribute to research on close relationships, as well as to the therapeutic practice of couples. They can also have a practical dimension for individual psychological or therapeutic help. There is a chance that by developing self-esteem, as well as intimacy and passion in a client's relationship, the therapist will not only enable her to increase satisfaction with the relationship, but also with life.

**Keywords:** *Self-esteem, relationship, intimacy, well-being, couple therapy.*

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## **HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC DISEASES: FACTORS IMPROVING SELF-CARE MASTERING**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** Chronic Diseases (CD) such as diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular diseases, neurological disorders, and cancers increase with age and place a burden on individuals and healthcare systems, and more they are associated with a lower Quality of Life (QoL) in the elderly. CD conditions suggested improvements of self-care investigations switching research perspectives from medication or dietary adherence, biological exams, or symptoms management to maintaining health through treatment adherence and health-promoting practices.

**Objective:** Aim of the present study was to evaluate the health management of chronic disease, analyzing the effectiveness of self-care and the emotional dimensions (anxiety, stress, depression).

**Materials and Methods.** We conducted an observational study on 132 outpatient patients aged 18 to 75 years (mean age 52.6 years, SD  $\pm$  12.4) diagnosed with CD; 57,5% of the sample were females. The participants were enrolled at the Clinical Medicine Division of S. Salvatore Hospital in L'Aquila, ASL1 Abruzzo (IT). The psychological battery was composed of three standardized self-assessment measured emotional traits (DASS-21), QoL (WHOQOL-26), and Self-Care (SC-CII). Participants were divided into 2 groups based on CD as follows: a) cardiovascular disease (ex. cardiological disease) (CVD) group was composed of 68 patients (51.5%), b) other disease group (ex. disorders of the locomotor, gastrointestinal, and urogenital systems) (OD) was composed of 64 patients (48.5%).

**Results:** Descriptive analyses based on sociodemographic and clinical characteristics showed no difference among all the variables (gender, education, marital status, occupation, and timing diagnosis). One-way ANOVA was performed comparing the emotional dimensions for both CVD/OD groups. Statistical analysis showed significant difference in the OD group which showed greater signs of anxiety ( $p=0.029$ ), depression ( $p=0.007$ ), and stress ( $p=0.013$ ), than the CVD group. Then, we performed Pearson's correlation to compare the QoL with the ability to self-care index. The results highlighted a significant correlation between self-care maintenance, self-efficacy, and QoL.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Our results show that, among CDs, patients with gastrointestinal, locomotor, and urogenital diseases appear to suffer more than patients with cardiovascular disease. The QoL is compromised in the maintenance of physical and mental health, in social relationships and, in self-efficacy index; the study highlights those actions could be planned for a person-centered approach with the aim of planning a better health outcome in CDs to progressively involve patients in overall self-care.

**Keywords:** *Clinical psychology, chronic diseases, self-care, emotional impact, patient engagement.*

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