

Meeting of the European Advisory Council - European Chapter Convention

Discussion Group Epilepsy care in Europe – are depression and anxiety considered?

The discussion group on depression and anxiety in epilepsy care has been chaired by Marco Mula and Cigdem Ozkara. Attendees had the opportunity to discuss major issues in the assessment of affective disorders in people with epilepsy. All of them agreed that the issue is of great relevance but it has to be acknowledged that the majority of epileptologists are not even aware that psychiatric comorbidity may significantly affect morbidity and mortality of people with epilepsy.

We identified three major points:

- 1) Educate doctors
 - 2) Educate patients
 - 3) Cooperation with psychiatrists
- (1) Educate doctors: Epileptologists need to be aware that depression and anxiety significantly affects quality of life, morbidity and mortality of patients with epilepsy. Teaching courses or scientific meetings are needed to improve awareness of the problem in the medical community. All attendees agreed that epileptologists should be involved in the diagnostic and treatment phases of psychiatric comorbidity. Besides, specific modules of intervention and standardized guidelines should be developed for different epilepsy syndromes, across the ages (adolescents and elderly) and gender (women and epilepsy and depression). Awareness in treatment options in patients with epilepsy and depression or anxiety are urgently needed, especially concerning antiepileptic drugs that should be always tailored on the mental state of patients.
- (2) Educate patients: All attendees agreed that it is important to improve awareness of psychiatric symptoms and the perception of the need for care among patients with epilepsy. Besides, misperceptions about psychoactive drugs should be acknowledged and addressed as well as the burden of an additional stigmatized diagnosis such as that of a mental illness.
- (3) Cooperation with psychiatrists: Psychiatrists should be involved in the different steps of epilepsy care. Discussion groups and teaching courses should be organized in psychiatric meetings to improve awareness of the problem and to educate psychiatrists about the effects of psychoactive drugs in people with seizure disorders.