

The impact of anxiety level on medical decisions of non-COVID patients during the pandemic outbreak

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Background: High anxiety levels (HAL) were widely reported in patients during the COVID outbreak. We assess whether HAL influenced medical decision-making (MDM) of Non-COVID patients.

Method: We prospectively recruited patients with cardiovascular complaints during February and September 2020. We assessed anxiety levels using the GAD-7, Beck Inventory, the cardiac anxiety questionnaires, and a newly designed MDM questionnaire.

Results: We recruit 287 patients. The mean age was 52.6 ± 14.9 (females represent 36.2%). HAL was reported in 261 (90.3) patients and was more prevalent in old ($p < 0.001$ for all questionnaires), married, and unemployed patients (significant p-value for all). Cardiovascular comorbidities and a history of anxiety, depression, and psychiatric disorder were independent

factors for HAL ($p < 0.001$ for all). Coronary catheterization was performed more in HAL ($p < 0.001$ for all), yet the rate of significant coronary artery disease was lower than in patients with low anxiety level (LAL) ($p < 0.001$ for all). 161 (56.9) patients reported that their MDM was affected ($p < 0.001$), and 149 (76.8) patients indicated that they would have gone earlier to the hospital if not the pandemic ($p = 0.03$ for high DM-19 score). Patients with HAL seek medical care longer than LAL patients ($p = 0.02$). Correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between MDM and HAL ($p < 0.001$ for all).

Conclusion: Our study shows a strong and positive correlation between anxiety level and MDM. Old patients with cardiovascular comorbidities and a history of mental disorders were at particularly high risk for HAL and sought medical treatment significantly longer than LAL patients.

Figure 2. Correlation between age and Anxiety level asses by CAQ, GAD-7, and BAI questionnaires

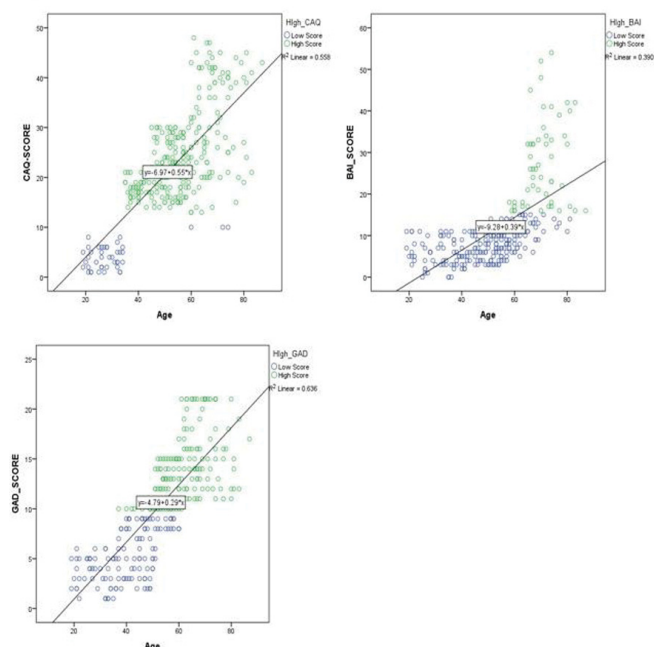


Figure 3. time to seek medical treatment as reported in the DM-19 among the high and low anxiety level seen on the CAQ, GAD-7, and BAI questionnaires

