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Title: The severity of depressive symptoms in the mothers of paediatric oncology patients

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Abstract

Introduction

The task of caring for a child with cancer can be taxing and is often associated with varying degrees of depressive symptoms. This study aimed to explore the socio-demographic data and perceived levels of depression of mothers of paediatric oncology patients at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (CHBAH), Soweto, Paediatric Outpatient Department.

Methods

This cross- sectional study was undertaken from 01/09/2020 until 28/02/2021. After consenting to participation, the mothers completed a survey that included socio-demographic data related to the mother and her child and the Hamilton depression scale.

Results

A total of 75 mothers of paediatric oncology patients at CHBAH participated in this study.

Significantly, 50 (66.7%) of the women were considered depressed (>7 score) on the Hamilton depression scale scores. Significantly more women suffered from mild depression in the study sample (χ^2=35.85, df=2, p<0.001).

Younger and unmarried mothers were more likely to be depressed. However, the level of education, employment and income levels were not significantly different between the depressed and non-depressed mothers.

Conclusion

Most of the mothers who participated in this study experienced mild depression. This study provides further evidence for the need of early psychiatric and social intervention in mothers and families of children with cancer.