

Clinical challenges in General Hospital Psychiatry

General hospital psychiatry or psychiatric consultation in general hospital is an important part of mental health services. Psychiatrists work in close cooperation with other medical specialists (cardiologists, neurologists, endocrinologist, etc.) in diagnostic and treatment process. This conversation between mental health professionals and practitioners in other medical disciplines provides a better understanding of the meaning of psychiatric symptoms, helps to make the correct diagnosis, evaluate the effects of medical conditions on psychological functioning, and to prescribe the complex therapies that can provide better treatment outcomes for the patients.

This issue of the Journal of “Biologic Psychiatry and Psychopharmacology” presents review article, case reports and treatment guidelines that arises from close cross-talk between psychiatrists and other health specialists.

The review article focuses on interrelationship of psychiatric disorders and cardiovascular diseases. Researcher Nijole Kazukauskienė from Laboratory of Behavioral Medicine at Neuroscience Institute of Lithuanian University of Health Science (LUHS) in the systematic review looking into risk factors of health-related quality of life in patients after acute coronary syndromes. This topic is very important knowing that coronary artery disease continues to be the leading cause of death and disability in most countries worldwide and is a major contributor to heart failure progression. Researcher concluded that among patients with coronary artery disease, after heart failure such factors as depression and anxiety symptoms, lack of social support and Type D personality features have been found to have a negative effect on health-related quality of life. By the way- it has been summarized that stressful life events can affect biological systems such as the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and immune functioning.

Two cases reports are presenting by psychiatrists – residents Karolina Laurinaitienė and Laura Maurusaitytė together with their clinical supervisors from Psychiatry Clinic at LUHS.

First case report presents clinical history of a 23-year-old man diagnosed with focal epilepsy and the experience of persistent symptoms of déjà vu. The patient was referred for psychiatric assessment due to suspected psychosis and a differential diagnosis was made between neurological and psychiatric disorder. This case again demonstrates the importance of cooperation between neurologists and psychiatrists in the treatment of patients with epilepsy syndromes.

The second case analyzes clinical history of 34-years-old women, who was admitted to psychiatric hospital for the treatment of psychotic episodes, confusion and cognitive impairment. The patient was misdiagnosed and unsuccessfully treated for two years before she was diagnosed autoimmune thyroid disease named Hashimoto's encephalopathy. This clinical case once again has drawn attention to the importance of endocrinological parameters, especially of thyroid axis function in terms of the development, course and recovery from mental disorders.

The research article of Laura Salciunaite and Linas Leonas (researchers from Health Research Institute and Department of Health Psychology at Faculty of Public Health, Medical Academy, LUHS) focuses on the evaluation of a popular, although controversial scientific phenomenon- the placebo effect. Authors analyzes this effect using two classical mechanisms – individual's expectancy and conditioning. The aim of this study was to assess the impact of conditioning and expectancy in placebo effect, analyzing caffeine and placebo influence on attentional functions. Authors concluded that both mechanisms - conditioning and expectancy are necessary to invoke placebo effect. However, when placebo was led only by expectancies, although it can be enhanced verbally and by social modelling, effect tended to be insignificant.

The psychologist - psychiatrist team of Laboratory of Behavioral Medicine of Neuroscience institute at LUHS – Julija Geciūtė, Julius Burkauskas and Vesta Steiblienė comments the need of validated screening instruments for evaluation of problematic alcohol use in Lithuania. In the opinion of the clinicians – the AUDIT questionnaire could be a potential tool for an accurate evaluation of psychometric characteristics. Therefore, further research in the area of scale cross-cultural validation for alcohol use is warranted.

Editorial team wants to thank medical students of LUHS Vykinta Zeleckytė, Greta Briliūtė and Mindaugas Brazdziūnas for the translation into Lithuanian and preparation for the publishing WFSBP and IAWMH Guidelines for the treatment of alcohol use disorders in pregnant women. Guidelines are reprinted with permission of WFSBP, Taylor & Francis and Lithuanian Society of Biological Psychiatry. This translation will help a wider range of Lithuanian health care professionals gain the knowledge they need for the clinical practice.

The topic of challenges of general hospital psychiatry in this journal issue are closing by PhD thesis of medical doctor Audrius Alonderis “Sleep apnea in coronary artery disease patients: prevalence, cross-sectional predictors, association with left ventricular morphometry and function.” The data was collected while Audrius working in Laboratory of Behavioural Medicine and in Palanga Clinic.

We believe you will be interested in this topic. We wish you a pleasant reading !

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