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PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS IN WOMEN

Depressive disorders occur twice as often in women than in men. Depressed women are more frequently hospitalized than men and are at greater risk of chronicity. Seargeant et al. (1990) found that depressed women had longer index episodes of depression and a lower rate of spontaneous remission than did men. This phenomenon cannot be ascribed to artifacts of assessment, nor to the existence of compensatory depressive equivalents like alcohol abuse in men. To receive the proper explanation, the integration of biological, psychological and social approaches to depression is mandatory.

Weissman and Klerman (1977) concluded that this phenomenon reflects a sex difference related to both biological factors (such as those associated with female endocrine physiology), psychosocial factors (such as learned helplessness) as well as artifactual factors (such as women's greater acknowledgment of depressive symptoms and more evident help-seeking behaviour).

A number of studies have documented differences between women and men with respect to symptoms reporting, treatment seeking and coping style.

The most consistent finding across epidemiological studies of mood disorders is the higher prevalence of major depression in women than in men. The sex differences are consistent across the life cycle, but are much more prominent in young adults and in middle-aged persons than in elderly and children. In prepubertal children there is a male predominance in depressive symptoms and disorders. During the adolescence the female/male ratio approaches the value seen in adults (Bebbington, 1996).

Over past 40 years epidemiologists have consistently demonstrated a significant relation between depressive disorders and marital status. The highest rates of psychological distress, and particularly depression, have been reported for unmarried individuals (i. e. separated, divorced, widowed and never married). However, the protective function of marriage appears to operate more strongly in males than in females. Thus, whereas marriage appears to be beneficial for men, married women have been found to exhibit higher levels of depression than have both unmarried women and married men. For males, therefore, marriage seems to provide a buffer against the development of depression, whereas for females, marriage appears to exacerbate the disturbance (Gotlib and Hammen, 1992). Some authors consider that being married connotes more stress for women than for men. This can be supported by the finding that marital status has different associations with affective disorder in different culture. For instance, married women are at low risk to develop depression in Mediterranean countries and in orthodox Jews — these societies accord a high value to the home making role (Bebbington, 1996).

Certainly, not only being married, but also, if not mainly, the quality of marriage is related to development and maintenance of depressive symptoms. There is considerable evidence that marital distress may precede a depressive episode. For example Paykel et al. (1969) found that the most frequent life event reported by depressed women preceding the onset of depression was an increase in arguments with their spouses. Similarly, Weissman and Paykel

(1974). Also found that an increase in marital disputes was the most frequently reported event among their sample of depressed women prior to requesting treatment.

Also Brown and Harris in their large study of community-living women reported that the lack of a confiding, intimate relationship with a spouse or boyfriend was one of factors that were associated with women becoming depressed when faced with major life events or chronic difficulties (Brown, Harris, 1978).

On the other hand, marital situation has an important impact on the process of treatment. Dysfunctional relationships with partner are the major cause of chronicity of depression. Some authors reported that those women entering therapy, who had also marital problems showed less improvement in their symptoms and social functioning, and were more likely to relapse following individual therapy. Long lasting marital discord constitutes severe stress and decreases self-esteem. By contrast, resolution of marital disputes results in a decrease in depressive symptoms and a reduced likelihood of relapse (Gotlieb, Hammen, 1992).

In our Department we examined couples, in which one spouse was diagnosed with recurrent unipolar major depression. We found that the quality of marital relationships has more pronounced impact on symptoms and depressive thinking style of female than of male patients. Lack of satisfaction in marriage is perceived by women as life failure. This can by explained by the fact, that normal functioning of woman is based on the need of intimacy and women tend to concentrate on feelings and emotions (Zieba et al, 1997).

Depression affects not only the patient but also his family members, especially spouse. In our research we tried to assess the thinking styles and focus on the presence of any depressive symptoms in spouses of patients suffering from recurrent Major Depression in full or partial remission. Generally, depression of wife/husband has an important impact on the spouse, increasing the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. Marital relations are perceived as bad. There exist clear differences between wife and husbands of depressive patients. Our results indicate significantly worse general feelings and more depressive thinking patterns among females who remain married to males with a history of MDD. The BDI scores suggest an occurrence of a significantly greater number of depressive symptoms in female spouses in comparison to controls as well as to male spouses. There is a similarly greater feeling of hopelessness and frequency of negative automatic thoughts. It would seem that spouses' depression has a greater, more destructive impact on females than on males. Women tend to withdraw more from social life, experience guilt, fear, anxiety and loneliness than do male spouses of depressed females. A male's depressive illness strike at issues of utmost priority for a female (i. e. household, intimacy, partnership). When a male finds himself in a similar situation, he may cope by absorbing himself in other activities outside of the house (e. g. career, friends, sports, drawing satisfaction from these external entities). (Dudek et al. 2001)

In most countries women are less likely to be in paid employment than men, particularly if they are involved in home-making and child care. Moreover, if they do work, they may still retain responsibilities at home.

Employment has several "latent functions", for example time structure, social contact, activity, status, purposefulness, sense of control (Jahoda, 1982). The effects of being unemployed must include consequences related to them. Being employed can play a protective role against depression in women, especially if work provides extra social support. If it does not, it may increase the burdens on women. The benefits of employment are weaker in married women, still more so if they have children, which can be explained by the role conflict and overload. Thus, part of the excess of depressive disorders in women may be related both to their reduced involvement in employment and to the particular strains they are exposed to if they do work (Bebbington, 1996).

Another topic is the possibility to return to professional career after depressive episode. Generally, women are at greater risk to lose their job because of illness, and in consequence, staying at home, irrespectively to their well-being, education and qualifications. In our research, done in The Department of Psychiatry in Krakow, we examined patients 1—4 years after discharge from in-patient treatment because of severe, endogenous depression. About 60 % of women had constant or periodic pension and stayed at home, whereas men after hospitalization returned to their full-time job (55 %), or being on pension had additional employment (40 %). Part of women did not continue their professional activity in spite of relatively good mental state and full symptomatic remission (only 4 women returned to job in comparison with ten with full remission). This reflects nowadays social situation in which men fell more responsible to earn money and are more willingly employed. By contrast, traditional female role of wife and mother exposes women to many duties and explains staying at home (Zięba et al., 1995).

One important factor in the etiology and maintenance of depression is cognitive process as described in two major cognitive theory of depression: Beck's model (Beck, 1967) and an attributional reformulation of learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman, Teasdale, 1978). Beck's model hypothesizes that cognitive style is based on a stable schema which structures how information is perceived, processed, stored and retrieved. He further hypothesizes that a stable dysfunctional schema may play a causal role in the genesis of depressive episodes and may become latent during symptomatic recovery (Beck, 1967, Beck et al., 1979).

Research supporting this hypothesis has been contradictory (Headlund, Rude, 1995, Riskind, Rholes, 1984, Schrader et al., 1986, Tiggerman et al., 1991). Abramson et al. (1978) hypothesize that depressed individuals have a depressotypic cognitive style which is characterized by a tendency to attribute negative outcomes to internal, stable and global causes. They further postulate that these attributions have a causal role in the development of depression. Although most studies have supported the fact that attributional style and depressed mood are strongly related, they have not been able to determine whether a dysfunctional attributional style is antecedent, concomitant or a result of depression (Tiggerman et al., 1991). More recent research suggests that a negative attributional style may be a state rather than trait phenomenon (Deutscher, Cimbolic, 1990, Marcos et al., 1990, Tiggerman et al., 1991, Zemore, Veikle, 1989).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that gender differences in cognitive style may contribute to a higher risk of mood disorders in women than in men. Surprisingly, few studies

have addressed this issue. Nolen-Hoeksema hypothesizes that the gender differences in the incidence of depression may be related to the difference in how men and women respond to depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987). She maintains that women tend to focus on depressed material more than men, which in turns maintains the depressed mood. On the other hand, men engage in activities which distract them from their depressive symptoms, thus diminishing their depressed mood (Katz, Bertelson, 1993).

Some evidence suggest that women generally have lower self-esteem than men (Gove, 1978) and are significantly more likely to self-focus following a negative event (Ingram et al., 1988).

Additionally, many investigators have emphasized that depressed women have a dysfunctional thinking style which predispose them to depressive episodes and may also prolong these episodes. In our study of 40 patients with unipolar recurrent depression, followed for 3 years after the discharge from hospital, we provided further evidence of gender-specific differences in major depression, showing that over time women are prone to more functional impairment and negative thinking than men (Dudek et al., 2000).

Sex differences in the prevalence and course of major depression are a complex phenomenon. Psychosocial factors as marital status and quality, employment status and thinking patterns play an important role in female's depression.

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Психосоціальні аспекти депресивних розладів у жінок

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Поширеність депресивних розладів серед жінок є в два рази вищою порівняно з чоловіками. Також характерними для них є вищий ризик хронізації та менша вірогідність спонтанних ремісій. Найбільш вираженою є різниця у частоті виникнення депресивних розладів у чоловіків та жінок молодого та середнього віку та підлітків. За даними Klermann (1977) це пояснюється як біологічними, так психосоціальними властивостями.

У роботі проведено дослідження зв'язку типу мислення, сімейного та трудового статусу у чоловіків та жінок із виникненням депресивних розладів. За даними дослідження встановлено, що найбільшим ризиком виникнення депресії характеризуються особи, що не мають шлюбних відносин, проте захисна функція шлюбу у чоловіків є більш вираженою — у той час як для чоловіків шлюб є своєрідним буфером для виникнення депресії, у жінок шлюб підвищує вірогідність екзацербації розладу.

Також має значення якість шлюбних відносин — за даними Paykel (1969, 1974), Brown та Harris (1978) найбільш поширеним фактором, що передує виникненню депресивного розладу у жінок, є наявність або посилення напруженості у відносинах з партнером. Родинний статус також впливає на час, необхідний для досягнення ремісії — дисфункція сімейних відносин є фактором хронізації розладу, у той час як їхня нормалізація — навпаки, призводить до редукції депресивної симптоматики (Gotlieb, Hammen, 1992).

У нашому дослідженні проводилося вивчення статусу чоловіків та жінок пацієнтів із депресією, яке показало, що жінки сприймають захворювання чоловіка значно гостріше, ніж чоловіки, у них частіше відмічається відмова від соціальних зв'язків, почуття провини, страху та самотності, у той час як чоловіки вирішують проблему шляхом концентрації на активності поза домом.

Працевлаштування за низкою обставин є більш проблематичним для жінок, ніж для чоловіків, але в той самий час є захисним чинником, особливо якщо праця дає соціальне задоволення. Значущим, також, є повторне працевлаштування після депресивного епізоду. За нашими даними, отриманими у Кракові, 60 % жінок після одужання отримують соціальну допомогу, у той час як 55 % чоловіків повертаються до звичної праці та близько 40 % додатково працюють, отримуючи соціальну допомогу.

Гендерні особливості стилю мислення можуть підвищувати ризик виникнення депресії у жінок порівняно із чоловіками, що, за думкою низки дослідників, пов'язано із нижчою самооцінкою та тим, як жінки реагують на депресію — жінки схильні концентруватися на своєму стані, що підтримує перебіг розладу. Також, образ мислення впливає на тривалість депресивних епізодів — при катамнестичному дослідженні пацієнтів з уніполярною рекурентною депресією було встановлено, що через 3 роки після виписки жінки мають вираженіші функціональні порушення та негативне мислення порівняно з чоловіками.

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Психосоциальные аспекты депрессивных расстройств у женщин

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Распространенность депрессивных расстройств среди женщин в два раза выше, чем среди мужчин. Также характерными для них являются больший риск хронизации и меньшая вероятность спонтанных ремиссий расстройства. Наиболее выраженными являются различия в частоте возникновения депрессивных расстройств у мужчин и женщин молодого и среднего возраста и подростков. По данным Klermann (1977) это явление объясняется как биологическими, так и психосоциальными особенностями.

В данной работе проведено исследование связи типа мышления, семейного и трудового статуса у мужчин и женщин с возникновением депрессивных расстройств. По данным исследования установлено, что наибольшим риском возникновения депрессии характеризуются лица, не состоящие в браке, однако защитная функция брака у мужчин выражена значительно сильнее — в то время как для мужчин брак является своеобразным буфером для появления депрессии, у женщин брак повышает вероятность экзацербации расстройства.

Также имеет значение качество семейных отношений — по данным Paykel (1969, 1974), Brown и Harris (1978) наиболее распространенным фактором, предшествующим возникновению депрессивного расстройства, у женщин является наличие или усиление напряженности в отношениях с партнером. Семейный статус также влияет на время, необходимое для достижения ремиссии — дисфункция семейных отношений является фактором хронизации расстройства, в то время как нормализация семейных отношений, наоборот, — приводит к редукции депрессивной симптоматики (Gotlieb, Hammen, 1992).

В нашем исследовании проводилось изучение статуса супругов больных депрессией, которое показало, что женщины воспринимают заболевание супруга значительно острее, чем мужчины, у них чаще отмечается отказ от социальных связей, чувство вины, страха и одиночества, в то время как мужчины справляются с проблемой путем ухода в активность вне дома.

Устройство на работу в силу ряда причин является более проблематичным для женщин, чем для мужчин, но в то же время является защитным фактором, особенно если работа приносит социальное удовлетворение. Значимым также является повторное трудоустройство после депрессивного эпизода. По нашим данным, полученным в Кракове, 60 % женщин после выздоровления находятся на пособии, тогда как 55 % мужчин возвращаются к привычной работе и около 40 % подрабатывают, находясь на пособии.

Гендерные различия стиля мышления могут повышать риск развития депрессии у женщин по сравнению с мужчинами, что, по мнению ряда исследователей, связано с более низкой самооценкой и тем, как женщины реагируют на депрессию — женщины склонны концентрироваться на своем состоянии, что поддерживает течение расстройства. Образ мышления также влияет на длительность депрессивных эпизодов — при катамнестическом исследовании 40 пациентов с униполярной рекуррентной депрессией было установлено, что через 3 года после выписки женщины имеют более выраженные функциональные нарушения и негативное мышление по сравнению с мужчинами.