

Publication

Mediators of gender effects on depression among cardiovascular disease patients in Palestine

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Among patients suffering from coronary heart disease (CHD) and comorbid depression, women experience a higher burden compared to men. Little is known on the characteristics that differentiate men and women with both diseases and whether these factors mediate gender effects on depression. This study assessed whether women are more likely to suffer from depression and which characteristics mediate gender effects on depression among a cardiac population in Palestine, specifically addressing the role of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).; Using a cross-sectional design, patients consecutively admitted with a CHD to one of the four main hospitals in Nablus, Palestine, were interviewed using a structured questionnaire with validated instruments. Data was also obtained from hospital medical records. Patients were assessed for depression using the Cardiac Depression Scale (CDS). Bivariate analysis was conducted to compare characteristics of women and men with and without depressive symptoms. Mediators (direct and indirect effects) of the association between gender and depression were evaluated using a structural equation model (SEM).; Women were more likely to suffer from severe depression than men (28.7% vs. 18.8%). Female gender was positively associated with higher PTSD symptoms, comorbidities, somatic symptoms and income, and with lower resilience, self-esteem, quality of life, education, prevalence of smoking and physical activity. Structural equation modeling revealed negative indirect effects of gender on depression (CDS score) through resilience, self-esteem and physical activity, whereas positive indirect effects of gender on depression were observed through PTSD, comorbidities, somatic symptoms and smoking. There was no direct effect of gender on depression.; This study found a higher prevalence of severe depression in female patients with cardiac disease compared to male cardiac patients. Our findings provide novel information on mediating factors of the association between gender and depression among cardiac patients, in particular PTSD. The results emphasize the need for further research on potential mediating factors that could account for gender differences in depression and the need to provide support programs for female patients with comorbid CHD and depression to improve their psycho-social well-being.

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