THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND FUNCTIONAL DISABILITY AMONG SWISS ELDERLY

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CONTEXT & PREVIOUS RESEARCH

• The continuing increase of the aging population raises concerns about the quality of life of the elderly. Prolonged life expectancy may be accompanied by increased morbidity and decline in functioning during old age (Bee & Boyd, 2003; Richard & Mateev-Dirkh, 2004).

• Levels of depressive symptoms are reported as generally high during old age (Blazer, 2003).

• Functional disability can increase the risk of depressive symptoms and outcome of depressive symptoms can be lead to the decline of physical ability (Blazer, 2003; Yang, 2006).

• Social and psychological resources impact the relationship between functional disability and depressive symptoms. These “impacting factors” can have a moderating or a mediating role (Rascle & Irachabal, 2001; Yang, 2006).

AIM OF THE PROJECT:

To elucidate the interrelationships between depressive symptoms, intervening factors and functional disability among Swiss elderly

METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

• Sample & Method
Around 4000 elderly people aged 65 and older, randomly selected in the cantonal and federal Swiss administrative records, without cognitive impairment, using a self-assessed and a face-to-face questionnaire. Data are from the VLV survey*, an interdisciplinary survey addressing the living and health conditions of people aged 65 and older living in Switzerland.

• Fields of research:
  o Functional disability
  o Depression symptoms
  o Social support
  o Activities
  o Marital satisfaction
  o Socio-demographics aspects
  o Further information is available on the poster “Surveying the elderly in Switzerland” by Marthe Nicolet and Eduardo Guichard

SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONS, BY DOMAINS OF INVESTIGATION AND INSTRUMENTS

• Socio-demographic variables
• Psychological resources
  o Satisfaction with life (Diener et al, 1985)
  o Personality (Rammstedt & John, 2007)
  o Religious faith (Koenig & Blümming, 2010)
• Social resources
  o Marital status and satisfaction
  o Type and frequency of family and friendship exchanges
  o Frequency and nature of support received
  o Activities and social participation
• Depression symptoms
  o GHO (Goldberg et al, 1997)
  o SADS (Wang et al, 1975)
• Functional Disability
  o Activities of daily living (Katz & al. 1970; Lawton & Brody, 1969)
  o Comorbidities (Rozzini et al, 2002)
  o Pain (Cleeland, 1989; Dionne et al, 2008)
  o Health-related quality of life (EuroQol Group, 1990)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Studies support the hypothesis that functional disability is associated with depressive symptoms, as well as the reverse. However, between these two variables, there are additional « impacting factors » that play a role in the process in which depression affects functional disability and vice versa.

In order to better understand the different ways in which these impacting factors can interact with depressive symptoms and functional disability, I will study these factors and separate the mediators from the moderators. The presence or the lack of these impacting factors have a relative importance in reducing or incrementing the relations between depression and functional disability.

Medical, psychological and social interventions will be more effective if they also target the protection of these relevant resources, and not exclusively the treatment of psychological and physical symptoms.

SELECTED REFERENCES


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IP 13 – Vivez Libre Vivre: Old Age Democratization? Progresses and Inequalities in Switzerland

SNSF Site Visit, University of Geneva, November 12-13, 2012