

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE SYMPTOMS, IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME AND SYMPTOM SEVERITY IN PATIENTS WITH MAJOR DEPRESSIVE AND ANXIETY DISORDERS UNDER ANTIDEPRESSANT TREATMENT

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: There is increasing evidence for a bidirectional interaction between MDD, anxiety disorders and GI dysfunctions. This study aims to evaluate the prevalence of GI symptoms in patients with MDD and anxiety disorders using lactose-containing antidepressants, the relationship between IBS symptoms and psychiatric symptom severity and the association of lactose intolerance symptoms with the lactose content of medications.

METHODS: (Ethics Committee Approval must be obtained and the number should be specified). This study was conducted using a hybrid design incorporating both cross-sectional and prospective cohort methodologies. The sample consisted of 300 participants with MDD, anxiety disorders and healthy controls. Antidepressants were classified as lactose-containing or lactose-free based on excipient information obtained from official database of the TITCK. A subgroup of patients reporting lactose intolerance symptoms was re-evaluated after a 6–8 week lactose-free diet and continued antidepressant therapy. Patients reporting lactose intolerance symptoms received standardized information regarding lactose-containing foods. Those who did not adhere to recommendations and lactose intake during follow-up were excluded to minimize external lactose exposure as a confounding factor. It was approved by the Ethics Committee for Scientific

Research of the University of Health Sciences Gulhane with decision no: 2024-73 (14.11.2024).

RESULTS: Increased IBS severity was associated with HADS-Anxiety, HADS-Depression and SDQ-20, whereas SSAS scores did not differ significantly between IBS severity groups. Furthermore, patients using lactose-free antidepressants showed more prominent reductions in lactose intolerance symptoms particularly gas, bloating, nausea/vomiting and belching within 6–8 weeks compared to those using lactose-containing medications. Multivariate logistic regression analysis identified age, HADS-Depression, SSAS and SDQ-20 scores as independent risk factors for IBS.

CONCLUSIONS: Patients with IBS complaints exhibited increased psychiatric symptoms and heightened somatic sensitivity; age, depression scores, dissociative symptoms and somatic amplification were identified as important predictors of IBS. Although the lactose content of antidepressants is relatively low, heightened visceral sensitivity may render excipient exposure clinically significant.

Keywords: Major depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, lactose intolerance, irritable bowel syndrome