Depression levels in colorectal cancer remain high five years after surgery: findings from the ColoRECtal Wellbeing (CREW) study

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Wellbeing (CREW) study investigated the incidence and prevalence of depression in people with colorectal cancer (CRC) before and after surgery. Data were collected during the recruitment period (Nov 2010–March 2012) from eligible patients attending 29 UK cancer centres. High levels of depression (CES-D > 20) over 5 years were identified.

BACKGROUND

• The prevalence of depression is greater in people living with and beyond cancer (15%) compared to the UK general population (3%) [1,2].
• Depression in people with colorectal cancer (CRC) is associated with quality of life (QoL) outcomes [3,4] and recovery [5].
• Few studies in CRC have explored depression in the long term [6] and assessed risk factors before starting treatment.
• The UK ColoRECtal Wellbeing (CREW) study [4] investigated the incidence and factors associated with clinical levels of depression in a CRC cohort up to 5 years following curative intent surgery.

RESULTS

Crew study participants

• Mean age at study entry 68 years; 60% male; 65% colon and 35% rectal cancer; Duke’s stage: A 14%, B 53% and C 32% (see Foster et al 2016 [4]).

Incidence of depression over time

• Mean CES-D scores peaked at baseline (13.3) and steadily decreased to 10.4 five years after surgery.
• Over 21% of participants reported clinical levels of depression (CES-D > 20) in the first year, which also reduced over time, however almost 15% of respondents continued to report clinical levels at five years (Fig 3).

Depression before surgery (baseline)

• Before surgery, significantly higher mean CES-D scores were observed in:
  - Females*
  - Younger age groups (<51 years old)*
  - Single/divorced/widowed domestic status*
  - People who were unemployed*
  - Living in temporary accommodation**
  - Living in areas with greater deprivation*
• Significantly higher proportions of participants reporting clinical levels of depression at baseline tended to be:
  - Female*
  - Single/divorced/widowed domestic status*
  - Living in temporary accommodation*

(N = 741; p values: *p<0.01, **p<0.001, *p<0.05)

CONCLUSIONS

At diagnosis and at time points up to 5 years after surgery, around 15% of people studied had clinical levels of depression. This is higher than the UK average and its sustained prevalence suggests that screening tools for depression should be introduced early in the care pathway, so patients can be quickly and suitably referred for appropriate early intervention.

References