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A study of patient anxiety before surgical operation

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Preoperative anxiety can worsen the outcome of treatment because anxious patients have worse perception of information. The purpose of the study was to assess patient's perceived anxiety before surgery, determine its links with sociodemographic factors, the nature of the operation and the patient's informational awareness before surgery.

Methodology: The survey was carried out among the patients' hospitalized to the Hospital of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Siauliai Republican Hospital. The study participants: 191 patients from the surgical units, 189 from the ophthalmology units, 199 from orthopedics and traumatology units. The instrument: 102-item questionnaire that consisted of sociodemographic questions, questions concerning the patients' anxiety before surgical intervention, patients' informational awareness and their expectations for preoperative counseling.

Results: This study involved 579 respondents: 37.5% of men and 62.5% of women. One-fifth of the patients involved in the study (20.8%) felt mild anxiety, 12.9% felt moderate anxiety and 3.6 - severe anxiety. Women felt moderate and severe anxiety statistically more often than men (20.1 percent and 10.6 percent respectively). The age of the patient, the hospital or the department to which they were hospitalized, were not statistically significant related to preoperative anxiety. Respondents of the survey with severe anxiety statistically significant more often indicated that they are worrying about various aspects which could potentially occur during the surgical intervention than those with mild anxiety. Anxiety due to possible pain sensation after surgery was relevant for both groups of patients with mild and severe anxiety.

Conclusions: More than one third of patient felt preoperative anxiety. Women felt preoperative anxiety more often than men. Preoperative informational awareness of patients, the nature of surgical procedure and the level of the hospital were not related to the anxiety before surgical procedure.

Key words: planned surgical intervention, preoperative patient counseling, anxiety