

ABSTRACT

Title: Pre-operative Anxiety in Elective Surgical Patients at the University Hospital of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

Objective: To determine the prevalence of pre-operative anxiety using three validated assessment tools and to assess possible risk factors in patients scheduled for elective surgery at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI).

Methods: A prospective, cross-sectional, cohort study was conducted on all patients admitted for elective surgery under general or regional anaesthesia between January and November 2014 who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. After obtaining written consent, a 42-item questionnaire was administered to patients by one of three trained interviewers on the evening before surgery, prior to the anaesthetist's visit. The validated tests used were the Spielberger's State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Visual Analogue Scale (VAS), and the Amsterdam Preoperative Anxiety Information Scale (APAIS).

Results: 236 patients were interviewed. 58.1% were females and the mean age was 45.7 years (95% CI, 43.8 – 47.6). High pre-operative anxiety was identified in 53.8% of patients using the STAI scale, 45.3% using the APAIS and

53.8% using the VAS. Strong correlations were found between the STAI (gold standard) and the VAS ($r = 0.77$) and the APAIS ($r = 0.71$).

Positive associations were found between high levels of anxiety and female gender ($p = 0.014$), single status ($p = 0.014$), energy drink use ($p < 0.001$), bad previous anaesthetic experience ($p = 0.047$) and those with a high information requirement ($p < 0.001$). The most common anaesthesia-related concerns were fear of the unknown (45.8%), post-operative pain (44.5%) and fear of physical disability (41.5%). Surgical concerns included waiting for operation (71.2%), complications during (55.9%) and after (51.7%) surgery.

Conclusion:

This study showed a high level of pre-operative anxiety in just over half of the elective surgical patients at the UHWI. It also demonstrated that the VAS and APAIS correlate well with the STAI, and hence are acceptable and more practical alternatives for assessing anxiety. Measures should be implemented to improve pre-operative communication with patients to alleviate concerns and improve their overall experience.

Key Words:

pre-operative anxiety, STAI, APAIS, VAS