



APPA 2020 Virtual Conference Resident Poster Presentation

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Title: Mental Health and Sarcoidosis

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Learning Objectives:

1. Characterize Sarcoidosis as a disease
2. Understand the impact Sarcoidosis has on mental health
3. Consider the rationale and pertinence of screening for Sarcoidosis in select patients

Case Presentation:

Patient is a 15-year-old Caucasian female with history significant for anemia presented to clinic for possible anxiety and depression. The patient states that she has been feeling “off” over the past year and that it has been gradually worsening. She attributes these mood changes to feeling like she has not adjusted to starting high school as well as her peers. She complains of feeling low on energy, losing interest in activities she was previously passionate about, changes in sleep and appetite and frequently feeling like a burden on her family. She also complains of new onset episodes of feeling excessively anxious around 3 times per week but denies symptoms related to panic attacks.

The patient has a maternal family history of sarcoidosis, anxiety, and depression. Two of her family members have officially been diagnosed with sarcoidosis, her maternal great grandmother in her early 60s as well as her maternal aunt in her 40s. Family reports that few other family members may also have sarcoidosis but have not been officially diagnosed. The family members who have been diagnosed with depression and anxiety are exclusively female, reportedly have symptom onset at a younger age, and have struggled with it throughout their lives. The family members who have been diagnosed with sarcoidosis also reportedly have more severe cases of anxiety and depression in comparison to other family members who have not displayed any sarcoid related symptoms.

Discussion:

Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory and immunological disease characterized by non-caseating granulomas with multiple organ system involvement. There is thought to be a genetic component to sarcoidosis as higher rates of the disease are seen in families especially with mother-child relationships. However, it is challenging to diagnose due to vague complaints such as fatigue. Furthermore, it is more mystifying to know when the disease actually manifests. Can one be asymptomatic for years without any overt somatic complaints? Some studies report up to 65% prevalence of anxiety/depression in patients with asymptomatic or symptomatic sarcoidosis. While the cause is not known, those with the inflammatory condition had significant psychosocial stress prior their diagnosis. This is a reasonable observation considering the interplay between the immune system and stress is well documented. Is it possible for anxiety/depression to be present in a large population of Sarcoidosis patients prior to their diagnosis? With vague complaints, patients suffer on average of 5 years before being diagnosed. Is it valid to screen patients presenting with anxiety or depression who also have a strong family history for Sarcoidosis? We need more research in this area to guide clinical practice.