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PUNCTUAL PREVALENCE OF MAJOR DEPRESSION AMONG PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CENTERS

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Introduction: Depression is common but still ignored in general practice whereas it is a source of handicap, psychiatric and somatic morbidity.

Aims: To assess the punctual prevalence of major depression in primary healthcare centers in Tunisia.

Methods: A Transversal study during March 2007 was conducted in three primary healthcare centers in Hammamet city. All patients having sixteen years or older were evaluated by the Cluster A of the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI). Patients meeting criteria for major depressive disorder had subsequently been assessed by the MADRS depression scale. A score greater or equal to 20 was considered as the threshold score for the diagnosis of major depressive episode.

Results: 199 patients participated at the study (participation rate = 70%). The prevalence of major depression was 13% and half of the patients suffered from severe depression according to MADRS. Depression affected more patients with low socioeconomic level ($p = 0.037$), suffering from a chronic medical condition ($p = 0.0013$), unmarried, divorced or widowed ($p = 0.022$). There were no statistically significant differences according to age, gender, living environment, alcohol abuse, and tobacco or life events. The frequency of suicidal thoughts or behavior was 3% in the sample and 19% among depressed patients.

Conclusion: Need of further general practitioners training in systematic screening of depressive trouble is still requested.