

(W44) THE DEMORALIZATION SYNDROME IN PATIENT'S WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS.

This presentation will discuss the importance of applying the concept of the demoralization syndrome to understanding the psychological functioning of patient's with multiple sclerosis. Historically, demoralization has been used to describe the psychological adjustment of patients with a variety of chronic, and often severe medical conditions, including cancer, and heart disease. It has only recently been cited as a psychosocial consequence of multiple sclerosis. Demoralization typically involves loss of meaning, feelings of hopelessness, a sense of incompetence, and existential distress. Although demoralization has commonalities with depression, demoralization should be considered as a distinct clinical entity. Demoralization can be treated by addressing a number of existential issues with the MS patient including feelings of confusion, isolation, despair, helplessness, meaninglessness, and resentment. Various scales have also been developed to objectively measure demoralization. Future research directions for using the concept of demoralization will be reviewed.

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