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Prognostic impact of perceived social isolation in patients with heart failure

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Background: Perceived social isolation (SI), the subjective sense of feelings of loneliness or isolation, has a negative impact on health outcomes, particularly in older adults. Although SI may also contribute to poor prognosis in patients with HF, evidence on the relationship between SI and outcomes in patients with HF is limited.

Purpose: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between SI and hospital readmission in patients with HF.

Methods: This study was a single center prospective cohort study. We consecutively enrolled 203 patients (mean age 72.9±11.7) who admitted for acute HF or exacerbation of chronic HF. At hospital discharge, we assessed perceived SI by using Lubben Social Network Scale - 6 (LSNS-6). Lower scores in LSNS-6 represents greater SI. Study outcome was rehospitalization for worsening HF within 180 days after discharge. We selected the optimal cutoff point of LSNS-6 that predict a worse outcome by the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis. We investigate the association between SI and 180-days HF rehospitalization by using Cox proportional-hazard models, controlling for potential confounding factors.

Results: During follow up, A total of 40events (19.7%) were observed. The optimal cut-off point of LSNS-6 score was 17 points (the area under the ROC curve: 0.62, p<0.05, sensitivity: 82.5%, specificity 42.4%). Kaplan-Meier survival curves showed that those patients with greater SI (LSNS-6>17) presented significantly higher HF rehospitalization rate (Figure). After adjusting for several pre-existing prognostic factors, LSNS-6>17 was independently associated with HF rehospitalization (hazard ratio2.15,95% confidence interval 1.00-4.89).

Conclusion: The present study shows that SI is a independent predictor of HF rehospitalization in patients with HF. Assessing SI in the clinical practice with a brief screening tool may help identify patients with heart failure at greater risk of rehospitalization.
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Figure. Kaplan-Meier curves for the incidences of rehospitalization for HF