

Frequency of Aphthous Ulcer and its Association with Stress among a Group of Students of Tikrit Medical College

Amna Kamal Mohamed Ali, Department of Medicine, Tikrit University College of medicine [TUCOM].

This is a Diploma dissertation conducted in Tikrit University College of Medicine [TUCOM], 2017, under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr. Ahmed Abdul-Aziz.

Background: Aphthous ulcer or recurrent aphthous stomatitis is one of the most common mucosal disorders of the mouth. The exact etiology of aphthous ulcer is uncertain, but precipitated factors include stress, trauma, food sensitivity and genetic predisposition. Stress and anxiety have a role in the onset and recurrence of aphthous ulcers.

Aim: This study aims at clarifying the association between stress and aphthous ulcer and the influence of socioeconomic status, age and triggering factors.

Study design: An observational cross-sectional study was conducted during the period from 1st February to the end of July, 2017. The study population was recruited from Tikrit University College of Medicine. The total numbers of study participants were 566 students. The data gathered using a predesigned questionnaire, which is of two parts. The first part contained personal information (demographic characteristics) and questions related to aphthous ulcer such as frequency, number, site of aphthous ulcer, the duration of episode, aggravating factors, any treatment taken, smoking and family history of ulcer. The diagnosis supported by clinical examination. The second part of the questionnaire included the 10 questions about perceived stress using a modified perceived stress scale (PSS). The score ranges between 0 to 40. The answer was graded on a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from never=0, almost never=1, sometime=2, fairly often=3, and very often=4. The positively framed questions that include 4,5,7 and 8 are reverse scored, that is never=4 to very often=0. The scores are summed and higher scores indicated more perceived stress. The PSS in students with aphthous ulcer was compared to the value of Iraqi general population. The data analysed using SPSS version 20 and Chi square was used to determine the significance of ulcer frequency while student t test was used to determine the significance of mean value in those with ulcer in comparison to general population.

Results: Aphthous frequency rate in medical students was 31% (176/566), of them 62% (110/176) were female. PSS was high among medical students. In male students, 10% were under mild stress, 56% under moderate stress and 33% were under severe stress. While in female students, 6% were under mild stress, 79% were under moderate stress and 4% were under severe stress. Additionally, in medical students with

aphthous ulcer the PSS value was 23 ± 5.4 , while it was 16.5 ± 4.4 in control group. The difference was highly significant ($P=0.0001$). There was a significant difference ($P=0.004$) in stress score frequency between male and female medical students. Moderate stress score was the predominant in all six medical classes (56% to 86%) and highest in 5th class and lowest in 1st class.

Conclusion: The prevalence of aphthous ulcer was high in medical students, more predominant in female and with significant association with stress.

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