

Neurological Disease and Marriage

Nörolojik Hastalık ve Evlilik

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Abstract

Marriage affects people's happiness and lifetime. Researches support the idea that married people are healthier and happier and they have longevity than other people (single, divorced and widowed). In the world, incidence of neurological diseases increases day by day and they may affect patients, their families and societies. However, marital status, marital relationship, and spouse's situation affect illness acceptance and cope with illness. In the literature, it is stated that married patients are healthier and have long life span than other patients with neurological diseases such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Alzheimer Disease (AD), Parkinson's Disease (PD) and stroke. On the other hand, diseases such as MS and epilepsy may be risk factor to divorce or negatively affect their spouses or marital relationship in married patients. In our study, we aimed to examine the relation between neurological diseases and marital status, divorce, spouses' situation and marital relationship.

Keywords Neurological diseases; marriage; health; life

Öz

Evlilik, insanların mutluluğunu ve yaşam süresini etkiler. Araştırmalar, evli insanların daha sağlıklı, daha mutlu ve diğer insanlardan (bekar, boşanmış ve dul) daha uzun ömürlü oldukları fikrini desteklemektedir. Dünyada nörolojik hastalıkların insidansı gün geçtikçe artmaktadır ve bu hastalıklar, hastaları, ailelerini ve toplumları etkileyebilmektedir. Bununla birlikte hastanın medeni hali, evlilik ilişkisi ve eş durumu hastalığı kabullenmesini ve hastalıkla baş etmesini etkiler. Literatürde Amyotrofik Lateral Skleroz (ALS), Multipl Skleroz (MS), Alzheimer Hastalığı (AD), Parkinson Hastalığı (PD) ve inme gibi nörolojik hastalıklarda, evli hastaların diğer hastalardan daha sağlıklı ve uzun ömürlü olduğu ifade edilmektedir. Diğer yandan, evli hastalarda, MS ve epilepsi gibi hastalıklar boşanma için bir risk faktörü olabilir ya da eşlerini ve evlilik ilişkilerini olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Çalışmamızda nörolojik hastalıklar ile medeni durum, boşanma, eşlerin durumu ve evlilik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçladık.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Nörolojik hastalıklar; evlilik; sağlık; hayat

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is based on the association of a man and a woman, which affects people's health condition and lifetime.^{1,2} According to researches, it is stated that married people are healthier and happier, and they have longevity than other people (single, divorced and widowed).^{3,4}

Neurological diseases have high incidence in the world among other disease. Strokes, Alzheimer Disease (AD), Parkinson's Disease (PD), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), epilepsy, migraine, Huntington's disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) are some of them. They cause high burden in patients, their families and societies.^{5,6}

People with one neurological disease are marrying, have children or divorce as healthy people. Whether or not their disease has an impact on their marriage, if it has, how to have an effect or whether or not their marriage has an impact on their disease are curious topics. When reviewing literature, in neurological diseases, marital status, divorce, marital relationship, and spouses' situation are researched.^{3,7-10}

Marital Status and Neurological Disease

ALS is one of progressive neurodegenerative diseases, which affects the motor neurons.¹⁰ One of prognostic factors for ALS is marital status. Married ALS patients have longer survival and lowest death rate for both sexes. Also, married ALS patients show good prognosis than unmarried patients. As the reason for this, spouses are instrumental and emotional support resources, helper to struggle with illness and provide advanced access to care.^{2,11-13}

MS is neurodegenerative, chronic demyelinating disease. It is seen in Central Nervous System (CNS). It causes physical disability and cognitive impairments. As a result, difficulty in acting independently, prevalent morbidity, depression, anxiety, and impairment in quality of life (QoL) are seen.^{7,14,15} In literature, married MS patients have low risk of depression.^{16,17} Also, married patients have low

rate of receipt of behavioral medicine within one year of first neurology appointment compared to single and widowed.¹⁸ In another research, married MS patients have slower diseases progression, low severity of disease than singles.¹⁹ Also, married MS patients have higher score than single in QoL.²⁰

Stroke is one of the common causes of death and disability around the world. Marital status is prognostic factor for stroke. In the literature, married people have low ratio of stroke prevalence, low risks of stroke and low severity of stroke than separated/divorced, single people. Also, married stroke patients are less likely to die after stroke. As the reason for this; marriage provides spousal support, early health seeking, encouragement of healthy behaviors and adherence to medication. However, in a research, unmarried, divorced, and widowed stroke patients have low mortality rate than married patients in one-week and one-month stroke case.²¹⁻²⁴

Epilepsy is a chronic and multifaceted neurological disorder. It has adverse effect on people's medical, social and economic life. These challenges affect patient's marital status. These patients have low marriage rate than other chronic illness and general population. This rate is low in male than women. Also as known, married individuals have high level life satisfaction, physical and psychological health. In the literature, married epilepsy patients have higher QoL.²⁵⁻²⁷ Because of marriage is a source to improve coping capacity and has positive effects on mood, married patients have high level life satisfaction and good health status than unmarried patients.²⁸ In addition, being unmarried is found that it is sociodemographic risk factor for self-reported epilepsy.²⁹ Also, for acceptance of illness, general view in literature, married epilepsy patients have high acceptance level. However, in a research, unmarried epilepsy patients have high acceptance level, widowed epilepsy patients have lowest acceptance level are found.³⁰

PD is a neurodegenerative disease with motor and

non-motor symptoms such as rigidity, bradykinesia, tremor, and postural instability, impairment of olfaction, vision sleep, salivation, sebaceous gland activity, mood and cognition. In studies on PD, marital status is also, examined. According to some research, being single in PD is a risk factor for depression and affects to depression score. Also, single in PD has low emotional well-being score.³¹⁻³³ The treatment preference is influenced according to marital status since married patients are very likely to accept to treatment.³⁴

AD is a kind of dementia. Progressive impairment in memory and cognition is seen.³⁵ Marital status is important for survival. Married patients have positive effect on survival. Therefore, married patients have lower mortality rate than single patients. This may be the reason; married patients have higher rate in using anti-dementia medication. In addition, single patients are more likely to have depression, delusion, elation and disinhibition.³⁶⁻³⁹

Divorce and Neurological Disease

In cases where marriage cannot be carried out, divorce occurs. When look at the reason of divorce, poor problem-solving skills, displeasing personalities, marital history of marital discord, infertility, and maltreatment are seen.⁴⁰ Whether neurological diseases have an effect on divorce or not is investigated. According to a research with Swedish MS patients, after diagnosis of MS, men with MS decide to divorce. In contrast to men with MS, there is no difference between women with MS and women general population. So, MS is risk factor of divorce for Swedish men.⁷ In a research with stroke patients, stroke affects marriage relationship is found. Another study says that according to several studies in the literature, stroke cause divorce or separation.^{41,42} The highest divorce rate is found in patients with stroke (pWS). In Korea, the rate of general population is more than twice as low as that in pWS. In Iran, this rate is 54.8%. In a research in India, it supports that divorce rates of pWS is higher than general population.^{27,43-45}

Marital Relationship and Neurological Disease

Marital relationship status, mental health and happiness have correlated each other. Marital relationship status and happiness determine mental health in general population.⁴⁶ Whether neurological diseases have an effect on marital relationship status or not is investigated. According to a research in patients with ALS (pwALS), the pre-illness marital relationship predicts ongoing marital relationship for pwALS and their spouses. Also, psychological and social symptoms are more important than disease symptoms in marital relationship quality after diagnosis of ALS.⁸ In a research with MS patients, the patient's relationship with a spouse is damaged. Disease-adjustment challenges, difficulties in relationship and sexual functioning, and relationship dissolution may be reason of the damage in marital relationship.⁴⁷ Regarding the epilepsy, it is found that it affects to marriage negatively. In a research with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy (JMS), patients with JMS have worse family relationship performance than control group.^{48,49} PD has also negative effect on marriage namely young-onset patients have marital discord than older patients. Caregiver-burden and depression, depression and low QoL scores in patients with PD can be reason of marriage discord.^{50,51} Marital relationship in AD is affected usually negative; but sometimes positively. Caregiving for a spouse with dementia negatively effects on marital satisfaction. In a research, from the perspective of patients, they choose minimizing their problems unlike their spouses. According to another research, after AD onset, men have worse affective marital satisfaction, women has stronger affective marital satisfaction.^{52,53}

Spouses' Situation and Neurological Disease

Reduced quality of life, increased psychological distress, anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms can be common features of spouses or caregivers with patients that have ALS, MS, stroke, epilepsy, PD and AD.⁵²⁻⁶⁵ Therefore, we can say that the neurological illness affects not only the patient but also their families.

CONCLUSION

Marital status is a predictor of mental health and lifespan. Married people have mental health and long lifespan than single, divorced and widowed people. Whether the view is valid for neurological illness is examined. The general opinion supports the view. Also, being married decreases the rate of disease and provides good prognosis. In the emergence of this situation, being a source of social, emotional, and economical support for patients is effective factor.

Like marital status affects neurological disease, neurological disease affects marital status and marriage. Because of having a neurological disease, people can chose being single or married people can choose divorce as low marriage rate and high divorce rate in epilepsy. Also, neurological illness affects patient's marital relationship negatively. Their spouses show depressive and anxiety symptoms, low QoL, increased psychological stress. Briefly, there is a correlation between marriage and neurological disease.

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