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Krankheitsverlauf und Quality of Life bei Morbus Menière

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Menière's disease is a chronic condition defined as episodic spells of vertigo, hearing loss, tinnitus and aural fullness. The variable course of the disease, the lack of effective treatment and the unpredictability of the spells have a detrimental impact on patients' well-being.

The aim of this study was to analyze the course of the condition and the quality of life in patients with Menière's disease. This observational, longitudinal, single-center study included patients that were diagnosed and treated for definite Menière's disease between 1998 and 2018. Participants were asked to answer a questionnaire on their individual course of the disease, the Short-Form 12 questionnaire on quality of life and the questionnaire on life satisfaction FLZ-M Health. In addition, a physical examination that included audiometry and cervical vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (cVEMP) was performed. A total of 74 patients with an average follow-up 11.57 years were included. Mean disease duration was 8.62 years. Bilateral disease was observed in 4 patients (5.40%). Compared to the normal population, patients with Menière's disease showed a lower life satisfaction and physical quality of life.

Overall, vertigo attacks tended to reduce or disappear over time. In fact, the rate of patients free of spells was 44.59% at the time of the study. Compared to men, women had a poorer control of vertigo and more spells after similar disease duration. Men had a significantly better physical quality of life. Hearing loss in the affected ear was significantly higher in men than in women.

There was an association between higher degree of intense tinnitus and aural fullness and the frequency of medical consultations. Patients who consulted a psychologist suffered lower quality of life than the rest of the sample. The cVEMP of patients with Menière was smaller compared to the normal population in both the affected and the asymptomatic ear. Patients who recognized emotional stress as a trigger factor presented higher amplitudes in the affected ear than the rest of the sample.

These results highlight different manifestations and impact of Menière's disease among both genders. Menière's disease has a significant impact on the physical quality of life and life satisfaction of the patients. External factors such as stress may play a role in the saccule response. A holistic approach beyond the scope of ENT is required in order to manage the burden of Menière's disease. Quality of life measures may help evaluating the impact of the disease on the patient's life and serve as a measure of treatment escalation in the clinical practice.