Abstract

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of a unified cognitive-behavioral therapy protocol for group treatment of patients with a range of comorbid mood and anxiety disorders. Methods: In this open-trial study, the unified protocol was followed for the psychotherapeutic treatment of 16 patients with comorbid mood and anxiety disorders, confirmed by the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview. Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories, the World Health Organization Quality of Life evaluation instruments, and the ARIZONA scale of sexual function were used to evaluate progress in patients throughout the therapeutic process. Results: All patients showed unipolar depressive disorder. Comorbidity with anxiety disorders was distributed as follows: generalized anxiety disorder, 13 (81.3%); panic disorder, 3 (18.8%); social anxiety disorder, 1 (6.3%); and post-traumatic stress disorder, 1 (6.3%). Improvement was observed in the signs and symptoms of depression ($F = 78.62, p < 0.001$) and anxiety ($F = 19.64, p < 0.001$), overall quality of life ($F = 39.72, p < 0.001$), physical domain ($F = 28.15, p < 0.001$), psychological variables ($F = 9.90, p = 0.007$), social functioning ($F = 36.86, p < 0.001$), environmental variables ($F = 27.63, p < 0.001$), and sexuality ($F = 13.13; p < 0.005$). All parameters showed highly significant correlations ($p < 0.01$). Conclusion: An effort to establish one unified treatment protocol for a whole family of emotional disorders (primarily mood and anxiety disorders) showed benefits in the field of clinical psychology and for the treatment of patients. No other data were found in the literature describing the implementation of the unified protocol in a transdiagnostic group. Our results revealed statistically significant improvement in all variables, suggesting that the protocol proposed can become an important tool to improve quality of life, sexuality, and anxiety/depression symptoms in patients with different diagnoses.

Keywords
Protocol, transdiagnostic approach, anxiety, depression.