

6th International Conference on

EPIDEMIOLOGY & PUBLIC HEALTH

October 23-25, 2017 | Paris, France

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHANGES IN DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN OLDER ADULTS: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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Background: Late life depression is an important public health issue. Very limited studies have focused on the changes in depressive symptoms in the elderly. The aims of the study were to examine factors associated with the deterioration or improvement in depressive symptoms in older adults.

Methods: Four waves of the survey “Taiwan Longitudinal Study on Aging” from 1996 to 2007 were used. A total of 5,088 older adults aged 50 and over were selected. Depressive symptoms were measured using a 10-item depression scale (CESD, scores 0-30), dividing into 3 groups: no (0), low (1-9), and high (≥ 10). The changes in depressive symptoms were composed of 9 situations: no-no, no-low, no-high; low-low, low-high, low-no; high-high, high-low, high-no. Socio-demographic factors, health behaviours, and health status were examined for the changes in depressive symptoms by using Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM) method.

Results: There were 52.6% of participants remaining the same depression status, 24.9% in deterioration, and 22.5% in improvement. In deterioration situations, no exercise was associated with no-low status, and female, older age; and poor health were more to be associated with low-high status. In improvement situations, having spouse, being employed, and good health were associated with high-low status; and higher education, good health, without chronic disease and regular exercise were associated with low-no status.

Conclusion: No exercise and poor health were associated with the deterioration in depression, whereas having spouse, being employed, good health, and engaging in regular exercise were related to the improvement in depressive symptoms in older adults.

Key Messages: 1. Little research has showed the changes in depressive symptoms in the elderly. 2. About one fourth of older adults were in deterioration status, whereas more than one-fifth were in improvement status. 3. Exercise, employment and health status were associated with the deterioration or improvement in depressive symptoms in older adults.

Biography

Susan C Hu is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health, National Cheng Kung University. Her research interests focus on health behaviour and health promotion, especially for the older adults. Currently, she serves as the PI of Active Aging Project in Taiwan.

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