Determinants and trajectory of phobic anxiety in patients living with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator.

Abstract:
The implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) is the gold standard therapy to prevent life-threatening arrhythmias. Phobic anxiety predicts ventricular arrhythmia in coronary heart disease patients, but little is known about phobic anxiety in ICD patients. This study aimed to identify determinants and the course of phobic anxiety in ICD patients. 140 outpatients living with an ICD (mean age 56±14 years, 66% men). Phobic anxiety was assessed with the Symptom Checklist-90 Revised at a mean of 27±21 months (range 3-109) post-ICD placement (baseline) and after an average follow-up of 41±18 months (range 10-82). Multivariate linear regression models considered sociodemographic factors, clinical variables and psychological scales as potential determinants of phobic anxiety scores. ICD patients reported more than 10-fold higher levels of phobic anxiety than a previous representative population survey (2.6±3.4 vs 0.2±0.4). Greater age (p=0.003), previous shock experience (p=0.007), depressed mood (p4) at follow-up compared with baseline (31% vs 24%; p=0.048). Phobic anxiety was comparably high and persisted over time in ICD patients. Modifiable determinants of phobic anxiety were identified, which may inform tailored interventions to improve ICD patients' distress and perhaps also prognosis.