Prevalence of neuropathic pain in early multiple sclerosis.

Pain is considered a frequent symptom in multiple sclerosis. Neuropathic pain is the type of pain most closely related to the pathology of multiple sclerosis and its prevalence estimates vary largely. We prospectively assessed the prevalence of neuropathic pain in patients with early multiple sclerosis and investigated the association of neuropathic pain with other clinical parameters. A total of 377 outpatients with multiple sclerosis at an early disease stage were included in this prospective study. Mean disease duration was 4.2 years, mean Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) score was 1.6, 96.8% of patients were classified as having relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. Neuropathic pain was assessed using the PainDETECT questionnaire (PDQ). Depression, fatigue and cognition were assessed using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the Fatigue Scale for Motor and Cognitive Functions (FSMC) and the Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test. PDQ scores indicative of neuropathic pain were found in 4.2% of patients. Regression analysis revealed EDSS, BDI and FSMC scores as strongest predictors of PDQ scores. Neuropathic pain appears to be less frequent in early multiple sclerosis than expected and is significantly associated with disability, depression and fatigue. The assessment and therapy of pain in
multiple sclerosis should thus take into account neuropsychiatric symptoms already at early disease stages.