HWA-Byung (A Korean Culture Bound Syndrome): Anger or Depression?

Charles C. Kim (Kyum Chon)
Department of Health Promotion & Education, University of Utah

Background

Hwa-byung, an anger syndrome, is considered to be Korean culture bound syndrome (DSM-IV, 1994). Literature review suggests that Hwa-byung may be caused by emotional stress such as anger and/or depression, although their relationships to Hwa-byung are not clear. Recently, Park and her colleagues (2003) delineated their relationships such that depression (e.g., sorrow) may be more predominant at the beginning stage of Hwa-byung, followed by anger in the end. An examination of previous studies, however, suggest that anger may be first, then depression later. The purpose of this study was to examine these two important contributing factors to Hwa-byung using reliable and valid instruments.

Methods

The cross-sectional design was performed using two matched samples: 80 hwa-byung patients and 80 healthy people. The instruments were STAQ-K (Korean adaptation of State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory, Chon et al., 1997) and the Korean adaptation of CES-D (Chon & Lee, 1991).

Results

Both samples were not different in terms of demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, marital status, religious preference). Correlational analysis suggests, however, that anger was more predominant emotional stress at the early stage, while depression may be more predominant one later.

Conclusions

Both anger and depression may be important emotional stress for Hwa-byung; however, anger appears to be more salient in the beginning and depression in the end, contrary to Park and her colleagues' framework.