

Type of presentation: N/A

PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS LINKING VOCAL HANDICAP AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN LARYNGECTOMY PATIENTS

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Most studies investigating the quality of life of patients who underwent total laryngectomy focus on indicators related to their medical condition (e.g., time since laryngectomy, stage of the disease that lead to the surgical intervention, assistive method used post-surgery, radiotherapy). However, both psychological theory and empirical data coming from other clinical populations (e.g., chronic diseases, breast cancer) predict that the impact of medical conditions on distress, wellbeing, and mental disorders, is modulated by psychological mechanisms, which might favor or not the adjustment to the new condition. Little is known about the psychological mechanisms that could explain the relationships between vocal handicap post-surgery and subsequent quality of life for laryngectomy patients. Our study aims to investigate several psychological variables, such as negative automatic thoughts, rational and irrational beliefs, coping mechanisms and trait optimism and pessimism, as potential mediators and moderators of the link between loss of natural voice on one hand, and quality of life, distress, and depression on the other hand. A total of 60 subjects are planned to be recruited through professional contacts, in order to achieve adequate statistical power. Our results could have important implications for clinical practices, in terms of pre-surgery preparation of vulnerable patients and establishing the focus of psychological interventions aimed at increasing the quality of life of individuals using voice rehabilitation methods.

Acknowledgement: The research leading to these results has received funding from the Romanian Ministry of Education under the grant agreement PN-II-PT-PCCA-2013-4-1660 (SWARA)