

Abstract

Sixty Chinese patients on lithium treatment were interviewed from September 1997 to February 1998. All patients who participated in the present study were identified at the outpatient clinic of a large regional hospital in Hong Kong through convenient sampling irrespective of their adherence status. Information gathered in the interview included: self-report adherence status, demography, illness and medication variables, attitude variables, and self perceived support from the family. Multiple criteria of serum lithium level, patients' self report, family member's report and doctor's report were used to determine patients' adherence in the past one year. A non-adherence rate of 73% was found. Among the variables, young age, denial of illness severity, being employed and lithium monotherapy were found to be important factors in differentiating the adherent and non-adherent group. However, attribution of mental distress, health locus of control, and perceived support from the family failed to differentiate the adherent and non-adherent group. In light of patients' denial of illness severity, more psychoeducation about the nature of illness and the need of medication for both the patients and their family is needed. Furthermore, the underlying reasons for denial should be further explored.