

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF THE PATIENT IN THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION TO TINNITUS - SUMMARY

Tinnitus is a heterogeneous and complex condition. It represents a significant social problem due to its prevalence, its chronic nature (in most cases) and the high cost of medical care and reduced productivity of those who experience it.

Tinnitus is associated with varying degrees of discomfort and/or suffering. Available treatments, in most cases, are unsatisfactory as they do not lead to a complete resolution of the condition. This, therefore, implies the need to manage tinnitus in such a way that it has as little impact as possible on the daily functioning of those who experience it. Understanding why some people cope well and others find their tinnitus a source of stress and suffering is a challenge for professionals from all disciplines working with people with this condition. Among the factors that can help patients cope with stressful or crisis situations, which for some people the experience of tinnitus can be, positive psychology draws attention to a person's psychological (internal) resources.

The main aim of the conducted research, described in individual articles, is to assess the impact of selected psychological resources on the process of adaptation to tinnitus. This will allow us to identify ways/techniques of psychological work that can influence the development of the examined resources and, therefore, improve the effectiveness of individual and group psychological therapy for tinnitus sufferers. The following resources were selected for the study: sense of coherence, resiliency, positive orientation, basic hope, religiosity and spirituality.

The study group consisted of a total of 256 people with tinnitus, including 123 women and 133 men, aged between 26 and 80 years. The following tools were used in the study: Tinnitus Handicap Inventory (THI) and Tinnitus Functional Index (TFI) (both to assess the impact of tinnitus on the daily functioning of the subjects), the Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC 29), the Basic Hope Questionnaire (BHI-R), the Ego-Resiliency Scale (SPP-25) the Positivity Scale (P Scale), the Self-Description Questionnaire (KS) - assessing the level of religiosity and spirituality, and a sociodemographic survey. Medical records were also analysed to assess the hearing of the subjects.

Analysis of the results indicates a significant effect on positive adaptation to tinnitus of sense of resourcefulness (a component of sense of coherence), positive orientation, harmony

(a component of spirituality) and personal competences to cope and tolerate negative emotions (one of the factors of resiliency). No association was noted between perceived tinnitus annoyance and basic hope.

Based on the results, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. People with high levels of personal resources (harmony, positive orientation, sense of resourcefulness and personal competences to cope and tolerate negative emotions) can be expected to have decreased tinnitus annoyance.
2. Examination, by a psychologist, of the levels of personal resources in question makes it possible to identify, among people experiencing tinnitus, both those who require more support (low resource levels) and those who are unlikely to need long-term psychological help/therapy because they have sufficient psychological resources to cope effectively with deteriorating health. This will thus facilitate the management of personnel and financial resources of therapeutic centres.
3. Psychological intervention programmes for people with tinnitus should include therapeutic techniques, ways of working that shape and develop researched psychological resources, e.g.: mindfulness-based therapies (MBCT – Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, MBSR - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programme, ACT - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), interventions to increase opportunities to experience positive affect, elements of spiritually integrated psychotherapy.
4. Further extensive research should be continued in order to search for other relevant personal resources that may affect positive and effective adaptation to the perceived tinnitus annoyance.
5. Healthcare for people with tinnitus should be holistic - addressing the interconnectedness of the body, psyche and spirituality.