

Exposé: All-cause mortality after bereavement among men and women – Results of the German Study on Ageing, Cognition and Dementia in Primary Care Patients (AgeCoDe study)

Author: Dr. Claudia Sikorski

Letztautor [Vorschlag der PI's]: Steffi G. Riedel-Heller

Exposé wurde in AgeCoDe/AgeQualiDe TK 9 am 04.08.2014 genehmigt.

Background and aims

The loss of spouse is known to be one of the most adverse life events affecting adults and it is of special relevance in old age (Holmes et al., 1967, Moon et al., 2011). Elevated depressive symptoms following bereavement have been observed (Sikorski et al., 2014), but revealed no gender differences. It is reported, however, that men and women may cope differently with spousal bereavement. This large impact of spousal bereavement on men may not be reflected in depression scores or depression diagnoses due to systematic under-reporting (Hunt et al., 2003). More objective outcomes need to be investigated. For example, an elevated mortality has been observed in men, but not in women, 12 months after the loss (Moon et al., 2013), as well as an elevated cortisol stress response (Richardson et al., 2013). Literature in this field, however, is scarce and further studies are needed. This study therefore sets out to determine mortality rate differences in men and women after bereavement.

Sample

All patients interviewed face-to-face at baseline and still married. Need FUP I with information of marital status, and information of survival/death between FUP I and FUP V.

Statistical analyses

(1) Kaplan Meier survival curves:

Outcome: death occurring after baseline/FUP I

Analyses of effect of bereavement (change in marital status from “married” to “widowed”, Log-Rank test to compare the survival distributions of bereaved and not-bereaved participants.

(2) Cox proportional hazard regression:

Outcome: death occurring after baseline/FUP I (date of death)

Analyses of effect of bereavement (change in marital status from “married” to “widowed”,

Adjustment for (Hazard Ratios and 95% confidence interval):

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Depression parameter
- Comorbidity/somatic conditions according to GP questionnaire

- Cognitive impairment
- Smoking
- Alcohol consumption

(3) Analyses for panel/longitudinal data, using random or fixed effect models (logit)

Outcome: death occurring after baseline/FUP I (death yes/no)

Analyses of effect of bereavement (change in marital status from “married” to “widowed”,

Adjustment for (Hazard Ratios and 95% confidence interval):

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Depression parameter
- Comorbidity/somatic conditions according to GP questionnaire
- Cognitive impairment
- Smoking
- Alcohol consumption