



Psychological aspects and coping strategies in patients with mycosis fungoides

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Background - Vast progress has been made in the diagnosis and therapy of Mycosis Fungoides (MF), however only sparse information is provided in the literature regarding the patient's coping strategies with MF, its dermatological manifestations, the effect on one's appearance and its significance as a malignant disease.

Objective - To examine the individuals' perception of their illness and coping strategies with MF, while comparing different groups of patients with regard to sex, age, illness duration and severity of the disease.

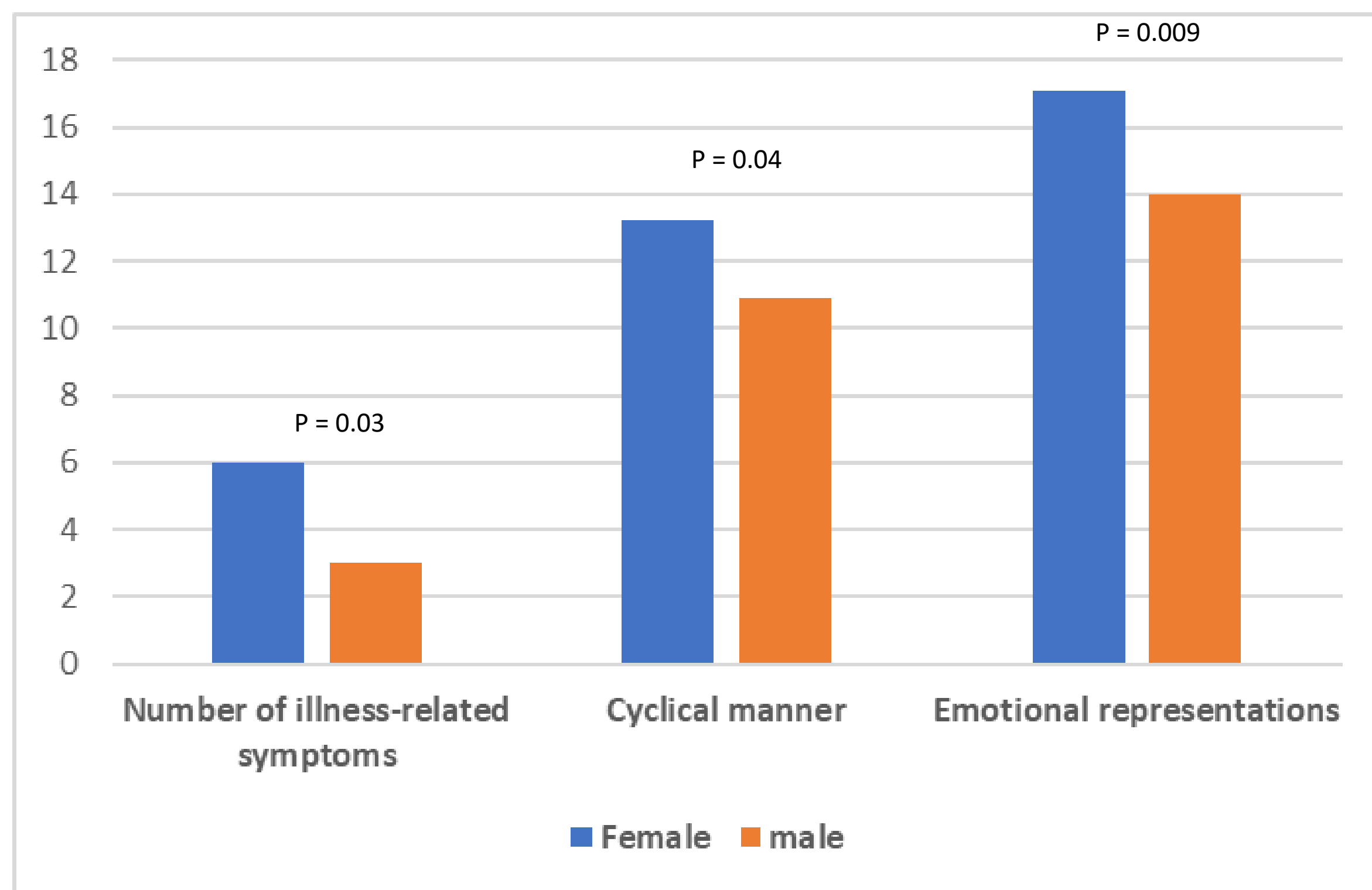


Figure 1. Gender and coping strategies (mean score)

Patients and Methods - 74 patients in various stages of MF participated in this study. The participants completed questionnaires concerning coping strategies (Ways of Coping Questionnaire) and illness perception (IPQ-R). A comparison based on sex, age, illness duration (0-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-10 years and >10 years) and illness severity (stage below IIB or stage IIB and above) was performed. Anova and Mann-Whitney U tests were used in the analysis.

Results - Women were found to report more illness-related symptoms ($p=0.03$) and experienced MF in a more prolonged and cyclical manner than men ($p=0.04$). Women expressed more feelings of anxiety and a depressed mood when asked about their illness in comparison with men ($p=0.009$) (Figure 1).

Furthermore, difference was seen in the number of symptoms reported with respect to disease severity ($p=0.15$). In addition, when reviewing the questionnaire results in relation to illness duration, a statistically significant difference was observed regarding sense of control over disease by treatment. A greater sense of disease control by treatment was recorded in patients with history of MF lasting 7-10 years in contrast to those living with the disease for 4-6 years ($p=0.046$) (Figure 2).

Conclusions

- This study in MF patients indicates variables which may be able to predict one's perception of the illness.
- This information may be beneficial in planning future supportive interventions for this patient population.

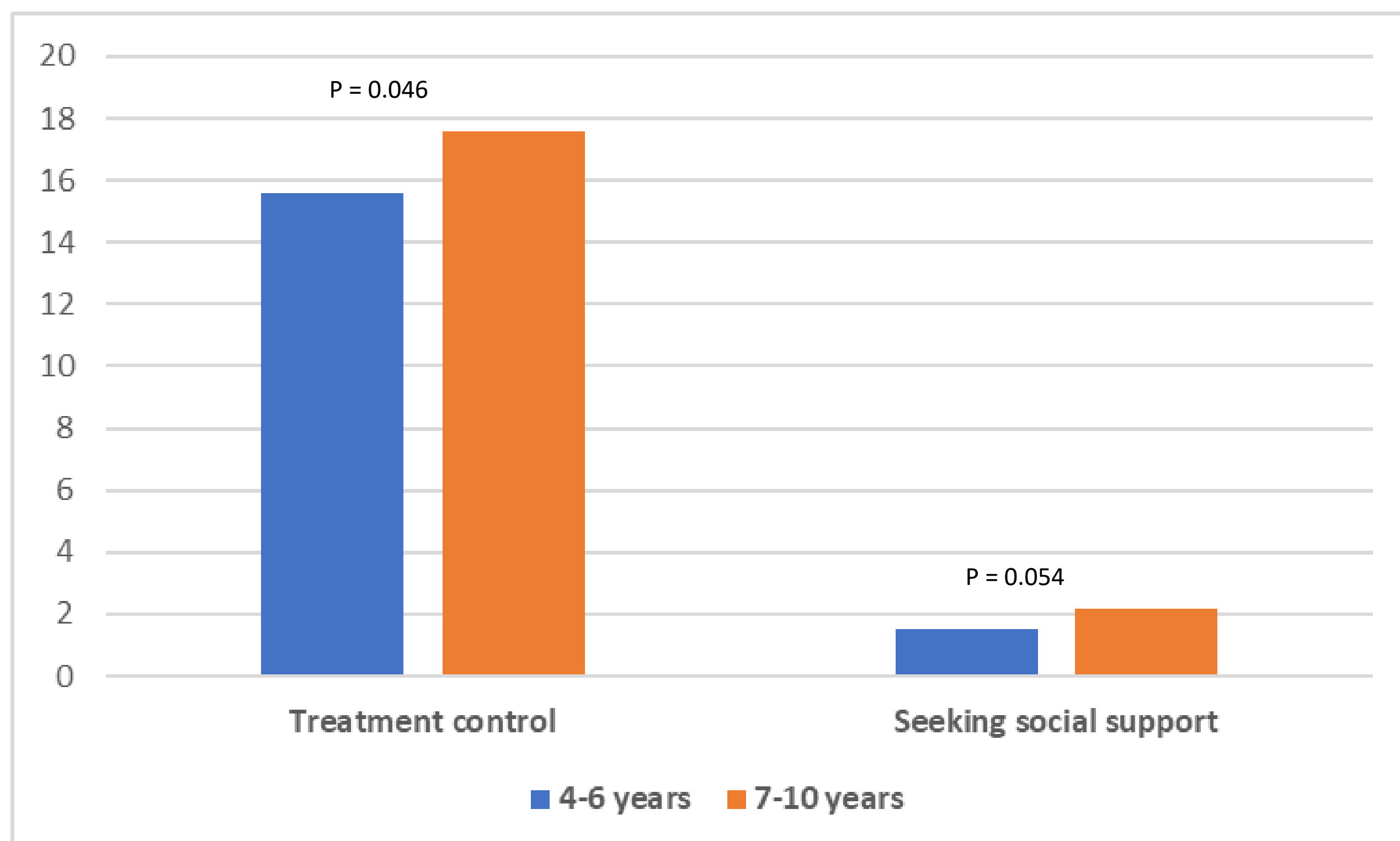


Figure 2. illness duration and coping strategies (mean score)

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