

Endometriosis and psychological interventions

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Abstract

Objectives: The objective of this systematic review was to analyze the results of psychological interventions as an aid in the medical treatment of endometriosis symptoms. **Methods:** This systematic review study conducted in 2016, in the databases Ixex Psi, Lilacs, PePsic, PubMed, Scielo and Science Direct. The descriptors used were “endometriosis AND psychology”, “endometriosis AND health” and “endometriosis AND support group”. The inclusion criteria were to contain in the title the word “endometriosis” and to describe in the summary or in the title of the article on psychological analysis, intervention and/or recommendations for the treatment of women with endometriosis; or contain “endometriosis” in the title and be published in scientific journals of Psychology. Exclusion criteria referred in the title to as exclusively medical terms or to only one symptom of endometriosis. **Results:** The search resulted in 13 articles and three categories: Bibliographic review, Context analysis and Psychological intervention. **Conclusions:** The results indicated a lack of bibliography related to the condition of endometriosis and Psychology simultaneously, mainly regarding to psychological intervention. These data demonstrated the necessity for studies that investigate and develop intervention strategies for women in this condition.

Keywords: systematic review; endometriosis; psychology; intervention.

Introduction

Endometriosis is an inflammatory gynecological disease characterized by tissue damage similar to the endometrium located in the uterine cavity, and is correlated to pelvic pain and infertility.¹ The prevalence of endometriosis in the world is 5 to 15% of women in reproductive age.² Usually the woman with endometriosis performs several medical consultations and tests to receive the diagnosis, since there is no consensus on how to diagnose it, the disease classification systems are few validated and accepted, and the symptoms can be varied.^{1,3}

Anxiety and depression are identified as recurrent psychological symptoms in women with endometriosis.^{4,7} Such symptoms can compromise the daily life of endometriosis patients, affecting the family, social, professional, economic and personal areas, which justifies a multi professional intervention.^{4,7-12}

The multi professional intervention can count on doctors specialized in pain, reproduction or gynecology, as well as psychologists, physiotherapists, acupuncturists, nutritionists, among others.^{6,7,13,14} Thus, the present study intends, through literature review, to identify the results obtained in individual or group psychotherapeutic intervention directed to the women with the diagnosis of endometriosis care.

Methods

In May 2016 a systematic review of published articles on endometriosis and Psychology was carried out. The systematic review uses explicit and systematized methods to summarize the published evidence on type of intervention.¹⁵

The databases consulted for the systematic review were: Index Psi (Index of Psychology of Technical-Scientific Periodicals), Lilacs (Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences), PePsic (Electronic Periodicals of Psychology), Pub Med Public Medline, Scielo (Scientific Electronic Library Online), and Science Direct. The descriptors used were: “endometriosis AND psychology”, “endometriosis AND health” and “endometriosis AND support group”. The descriptors were restricted to the Portuguese language, however, articles written in Portuguese, English and Spanish were considered.

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It has been included articles in Psychology journals that contained the word “endometriosis” in the title or abstract. In addition, articles that had the word “endometriosis” in the title and that addressed in the summary questions related to the analysis, intervention and/or psychological recommendations for the treatment of women with endometriosis, regardless of the area of the journal, were also included. Exclusion criteria were articles from the medical field, which presented exclusively medical evaluations and/or treatments for the relief of endometriosis symptoms; and articles that referred only to one of the symptoms of endometriosis, such as chronic pain or infertility.

In the Index Psi database were found and retrieved two articles in the descriptor “endometriosis AND psychology”, in the other descriptors no articles were found. In the Lilacs database, eight articles were found in the descriptor “endometriosis AND psychology” and five were retrieved, 41 articles were found in the descriptor “endometriosis AND health” and five were retrieved, and in the descriptor “endometriosis AND support group” an article was found and retrieved. At PePsic no articles were found in the suggested descriptors.

In the PubMed database, two articles were found in the descriptor “endometriosis AND health”, of which one was retrieved and no article was found in the other descriptors. At SciELO were found and retrieved four articles in the descriptor “endometriosis AND psychology”, in the descriptor “endometriosis AND health”, 19 articles were found, retrieving five, and in the descriptor “endometriosis AND support group” the two articles found were retrieved. While at Science Direct four articles were found in the descriptor “endometriosis AND psychology”, 17 articles in “endometriosis AND health” and two articles in the descriptor “endometriosis AND support group”. However, only one article was retrieved from the descriptor “endometriosis AND health”. These results were synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of systematized review

Databases	Descriptors					
	“endometriosis AND psychology”		“endometriosis AND health”		“endometriosis AND support group”	
	Found	Retrieved	Found	Retrieved	Found	Retrieved
IndexPsi	02	02	00	00	00	00
Lilacs	08	05	41	05	01	01
PePsic	00	00	00	00	00	00
PubMed	00	00	02	01	00	00
Scielo	04	04	19	05	02	02
Science Direct	04	00	22	01	02	00

A total of 107 articles were found in the three descriptors, but many of them were duplicated in other suggested databases or among the descriptors. Twenty five articles were selected, of which 12 were duplicate, thus totaling 13 articles retrieved. Among the articles retrieved, two were not found in their fully, nor their abstract, not being mentioned in the results and discussion of this work.^{16,17}

The data obtained were organized into three categories: Bibliographic review, Context analysis and Psychological intervention. In the Bibliographic review, five articles were included that carry out bibliographic review with other terms (endometriosis and economic cost or analysis cost, endometriosis and acupuncture, massage, Pilates or cognitive behavioral therapy, endometriosis and life quality, endometriosis and anxiety, and endometriosis and depression). The Context Analysis category included three articles that evaluated and / or analyzed data on comorbidities of the disease, such as anxiety and depression, as well as the routine and cultural aspects of patients with endometriosis. Three articles approach with intervention strategies with the direction of psychologists and were included in the category Psychological intervention.

Results and discussion

The results of the electronic search carried out in this work are in Table 1, with the identification of the descriptors and databases searched. The retrieved articles are summarized in tables. Table 2.1 refers to the articles in the category Bibliographic review; Table 2.2 shows the constituent articles of the category Context analysis and Table 2.3 the articles of the category Psychological intervention.

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 show publications with the theme endometriosis and Psychology since 1995. There has been an increase in the number of publications relating the two themes from the years 2002 to the present day.

The Bibliographic review articles (Table 2.1) highlighted the need for psychological support for women with endometriosis for a biopsychosocial treatment of the diseases symptoms. One of the articles found carried out a bibliographic search similar to this one, with review and analysis of the literature on non-pharmacological therapies in the treatment of endometriosis pain. Such a review resulted in little literature addressing these forms of treatment for endometriosis, with seven articles retrieved from a total of 61.¹⁸ Other articles retrieved in the present study carried out a search in the literature on endometriosis and life quality. Both identified reduced life quality in this population, with decrease in physical, social and mental well-being, as well as high levels of depression and anxiety.^{2,19} Also retrieved articles that showed a high impact on the financial life of patients with endometriosis¹², as well as a high level of depression and anxiety.²⁰

Table 2.1. Articles retrieved and allocated in the Bibliographic Review category

	Author	Spigolon, Amaral & Barra
Article 1	Year	2012
	Title	Endometriose: impacto econômico e suas perspectivas
	Journal	FEMINA
Article 2	Author	Marqui
	Year	2014
	Title	Non-pharmacological approach to pain in endometriosis
Article 3	Journal	Revista Dor
	Author	Silva & Marqui
	Year	2014
Article 4	Title	Qualidade de vida em pacientes com endometriose: Um estudo de revisão
	Journal	Revista Brasileira de Promoção à Saúde
	Author	Ferreira, Bessa, Drezett & Abreu
Article 5	Year	2016
	Title	Quality of life of the womam carrier of endometriosis: Systematizes review
	Journal	Reprodução & Climatério
Article 5	Author	Silva, Medeiro & Marqui
	Year	2016
	Title	Depressão e ansiedade em mulheres com endometriose: Uma revisão crítica da literatura
	Journal	Interação em Psicologia

Context analysis articles (Table 2.2) also investigated the life quality of women with endometriosis. One of the recovered articles found, through interviews, suffering and low life quality due to the disease.³ Another article, through inventories, evaluated and identified a high frequency of depression in women with endometriosis.⁵ The last article retrieved from this category, through questionnaires, assessed the environment in which women were inserted and found that more than half of them did not practice physical activity and insufficiently ingested vitamins E, C and fibers. He also observed that in the face of the diagnosis, they presented signs of insecurity and anxiety; they clung to a faith, to the partner and to the family; and agreed that there was cultural prejudice in relation to the disease.²¹

Studies that applied psychological intervention were restricted to three (Table 2.3). The first referred to an intervention with psychologists, who provided a sexological orientation to women with endometriosis who had undergone medical treatment with GnRH agonist. There was a decrease in pain complaint, improvement in sexuality and relationship with the partner.²² The second article retrieved realize a multi professional intervention, with the behavioral cognitive psychologists and physiotherapists participation, totaling 10 weekly sessions. They obtained as a result a decrease in the

Table 2.2. Articles retrieved and allocated in the Context Analysis category

	Author	Lorençatto, Vieira, Pinto & Petta
Article 1	Year	2002
	Title	Avaliação da frequência de depressão em pacientes com endometriose e dor pélvica
	Journal	Revista Associação Médica Brasileira
Article 2	Author	Matta & Muller
	Year	2006
	Title	Uma análise qualitativa da convivência da mulher com sua endometriose
Article 3	Journal	Psicologia, saúde & doenças
	Author	Vila, Vandenberghe & Silveira
	Year	2010
	Title	A vivência de infertilidade e endometriose: pontos de atenção para profissionais de saúde
	Journal	Psicologia, saúde & doenças

Table 2.3. Articles retrieved and allocated in the Psychological Interventions category

	Author	Montgomery & Pereira
Article 1	Year	1995
	Title	Uma abordagem psicossomática e sexológica da endometriose
	Journal	Reprodução & climatério
Article 2	Author	Lorençatto, Vieira, Marques, Pinto & Petta
	Year	2007
	Title	Avaliação de dor e depressão em mulheres com endometriose após intervenção multiprofissional em grupo
Article 3	Journal	Revista Associação Médica Brasileira
	Author	Mendes & Figueiredo
	Year	2012
	Title	Psychological approach to endometriosis: Women's pain experience and quality of life improvement
	Journal	Psicologia, saúde & doenças

pain and depression scores, as measured by the Visual Analog Scale and Beck Depression Inventory, respectively.⁶ In the third article retrieved for this category, a multi professional group intervention was proposed, with the participation of a pain specialist, a gynecologist, a cognitive behavioral psychologist and a sociologist. In addition to comparing the usual treatment, individual treatment and a support group without therapeutic intervention. In this study, an intervention was proposed, but it was not performed.¹³

Summary

According to the systematic review performed, medical treatment is currently the most usual for endometriosis. Even though the evidence points to the necessity for a treatment with multi professional characteristics, psychological intervention has still been little scientifically divulged in the aid of the treatment of endometriosis, limiting the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

This study identified few studies that correlate endometriosis with psychological interventions. Thus, it is necessary to carry out studies, interventions and scientific publications in the area of Psychology, in order to contribute to a better understanding of the framework and provide effective strategies. It should be noted that the descriptors used were only in Portuguese, and the results could be extended if the descriptors were searched in other languages. In order to broaden the search results, it is suggested to carry out searches using descriptors in English and Spanish.

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Author contributions

GI was responsible for development and application of research. MRZS was responsible for guiding research.