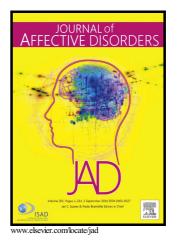
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Stability of the diagnosis of seasonal affective disorder in a long-term prospective study

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ABSTRACT

<u>Background:</u> Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is mainly characterized by a seasonal pattern of depressive recurrences over the years. However, few studies have been conducted on the long-term course of patients with SAD, whose findings raised questions about the diagnosis stability over time. This study aimed to better characterize the diagnosis evolution, and determine prognosis markers.

<u>Methods</u>: An initial cohort of 225 outpatients diagnosed as having a SAD, was assessed at baseline (T1) for clinical symptoms and response to bright light therapy. One hundred and nineteen patients (53%) were interviewed 2 to 12 years after (T2).

<u>Results:</u> Of 119 patients reached at follow-up (T2), only 32 patients (27%) still fulfilled the DSM-IV criteria for a stable SAD (S-SAD). A large proportion (59%) of the follow up cohort was in remission and 14% still suffered from a non-seasonal mood disorder. Family history of depression, previous suicide attempt, carbohydrate craving and HAD-depression score at baseline were associated with a stable SAD (S-SAD) diagnosis at T2, the HAD-depression score being the only one still significantly predictive (p=.025) of a later stable SAD, with a multivariate approach. Carbohydrate craving, a core symptom of SAD, showed a trend (p=.100) to predict diagnosis stability.

Limitations: Only 53% patients from the initial cohort were assessed at follow-up.

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