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Multicenter Study of the Psychometric Properties of the New Demoralization Scale (DS-II) in Spanish-Speaking Advanced Cancer Patients

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Abstract

Context: Demoralization is a state of existential distress in patients with advanced illness, typically with coping difficulties, feelings of loss of sense, and purpose in life and despair, among other things. The New Demoralization Scale (DS-II) is an evaluation tool for this syndrome, which has recently been reformulated on a shorter scale.

Objectives: The objective of this study was to obtain a Spanish version of the DS-II and to assess its psychometric properties in advanced cancer patients in Spain and a number of Latin American countries.

Methods: Following a translation-back translation process, a validation study and a confirmatory analysis using structural equation models with their corresponding latent constructs were undertaken. Patients completed the DS-II in Spanish (DS-II (es)), the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, and the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System-revised. Reliability was studied according to internal consistency; construct validity and concurrent validity with the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System-revised; discriminant validity using the Karnofsky Performance Status scale; and feasibility, with response ratio and required time. Cutoff points were established, and sensitivity and specificity were studied.

Results: The DS-II (es) was obtained. One hundred fifty patients completed the validation study. The confirmatory analysis showed coherence, and all items correlated positively with their subscales and with the overall scale. Cronbach's alpha for the DS-II (es) was 0.88, for the sense and purpose subscale 0.83, and for the coping ability 0.79. Demoralization correlated significantly with emotional distress ($\rho = 0.73$, $P < 0.001$). The tool distinguished between patients with diverse functional levels ($\rho = -0.319$, $P = 0.001$). Cutoff points at 10 and 20 out of 32 were established. The scale showed high sensitivity (81.97%) and specificity (80.90%). The prevalence of demoralization was 33% in our sample.

Conclusion: The Spanish version of the new Kissane DS-II demoralization scale has shown to be valid, reliable, and feasible with adequate psychometric properties.

Keywords: Advanced cancer patients; demoralization scale; demoralization syndrome; psychometric properties; validation.

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