

## Session 1 - Poster 11

### Alexithymia in Fibromyalgia Syndrome: Is it a discriminant factor?

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**Background.** Fibromyalgia (FM) is a chronic syndrome characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain associated with other symptoms such as psychological distress and alexithymia. We aimed at evaluating whether the presence of alexithymia could be considered a discriminant factor to identify different subtypes of FM.

**Methods.** One hundred eighty-five FM female patients were recruited at the “A.O.U. Città della Salute e della Scienza” Hospital of Turin and assessed with the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) for alexithymia. Psychological distress was assessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the Distress Thermometer (DT) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). The Short-Form 36 Health Survey (SF-36) was used for patients’ quality of life.

**Results.** Patients had a mean (SD) age of 52.1 (10.4) years and a mean duration of the disease of 107.54 (98.7) months. The TAS-20 showed the presence of alexithymia in 25.9% of the patients (48/185) (FM\_A group). The comparison between FM\_A and FM patients without alexithymia (FM\_nA) revealed that the FM\_A group had statistically significant higher scores in the VAS ( $p=.003$ ), in the HADS ( $p<.001$ ), in the DT ( $p<.001$ ) and in the PSS ( $p<.001$ ), and statistically significant lower scores in the majority of the sub-scales of the SF-36 ( $p<.05$ ), suggesting a worse quality of life.

**Conclusion.** The presence of alexithymia could be considered a discriminant factor that identifies a subtype of FM patients characterized both by higher pain and higher psychological distress.