

Abstract:

OBJECTIVE: To establish the magnitude of psychiatric disorders among leprosy patients in western Kenya. **DESIGN:** A cross-sectional descriptive study. **SETTING:** Busia and Teso districts in western Kenya. **SUBJECTS:** A sample of 152 male and female, adult leprosy patients. **RESULTS:** The prevalence of psychiatric morbidity (PM) was 53.29%. The PM was positively correlated with physical disability and marital status but not with age, sex, education, type of leprosy, or duration of the illness. The prevalence of psychiatric morbidity was lower among Kenyan leprosy patients compared to studies carried out in India (56% to 78%). It was high compared to the rate of psychiatric morbidity in those seeking medical help in primary health care centres in Kenya, which was recently estimated to be 10%. **CONCLUSION:** The prevalence of PM in leprosy patients in western Kenya was lower than that in studies carried out in India. This could be attributed to de-institutionalisation and re-integration of leprosy sufferers back into their local communities. Since the rate was more than double that in the general Kenyan population and seemed to be related to presence of physical disability, an appraisal of psychiatric services offered to these patients is needed.