

## Background

Autogenic Training (AT) induces a slightly modified state of consciousness by passive concentration on selected proprioceptive sensations. J.H.Shultz attributed the therapeutic Effect of AT to the self-regulatory ability of the organism, through functional modifications in the central nervous system. The aim of this study was to assess the effect of AT on Anxiety, Depression, Stress and Fatigue.

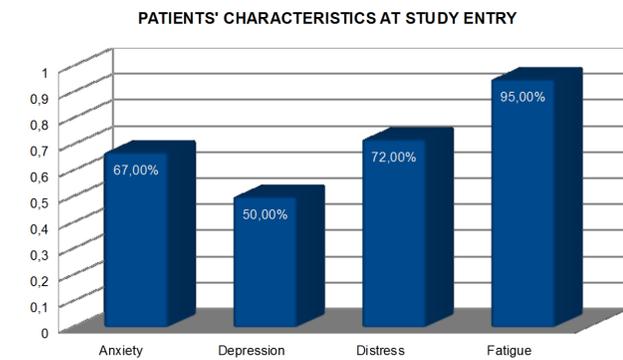
## Material and methods

An AT session consists in a visualization guided by a skilled psychologist focusing on heaviness, warmth, breath, heartbeat, and on proprioceptive sensations involving the limbs, the head and the abdomen. This practice has demonstrated to reverse the subjective experience of anxiety and distress to a state of psycho-physiological relaxation. From 10/2014 to 12/2015, 25 cancer outpatients were recruited through announcements posted in the waiting room of the oncological Day Hospital of the Oncology Unit of Piacenza Hospital. Twenty-two patients were female, 5 had a metastatic disease. Mean age was 57 (30-74). Four courses of 10 weekly AT sessions were performed, in groups of 8 (5-9) patients; the on site sessions lasted 75 minutes; home daily practice of 30 min. was recommended. Evaluations were performed before the first and after the last session. The validated tests used were: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS); Distress Thermometer (DT) and Facit Fatigue Scale. For statistical analysis a paired t-test and the STATA software were used.

Design of the present pilot study	
Number of Patients	25
Subjects per course	Mean 8 (5-9)
Duration of a single session	75 minutes
Schedule of session administration	Weekly
Duration of a single course	10 sessions (10 weeks)
Recruitment	Day Hospital Oncology Unit of Piacenza Hospital; consecutive patients
Duration of the entire study	14 months
Inclusion Criteria	Motivation to attend the course; willing to complete tests; informed consent.
Exclusion criteria	Cognitive disorders; logistic problems; previous AT in the last 12 months
Time of completion of Basal tests	First TA session
Time of completion of Final tests	Last TA session

Tab. 1 Characteristics of the Patients

Number of patients enrolled in the study	25 (M:3; F:22)
Median age	57 (30-74)
Patients with metastatic disease	5



### Validated Tests used

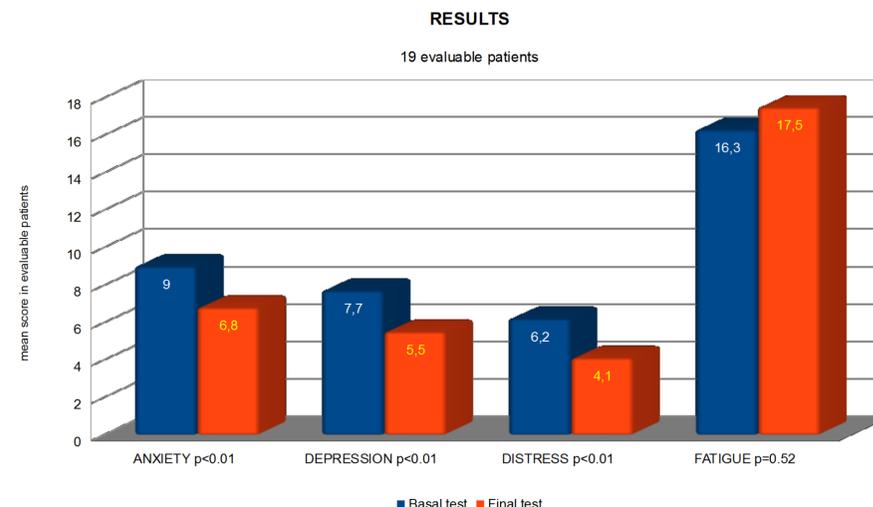
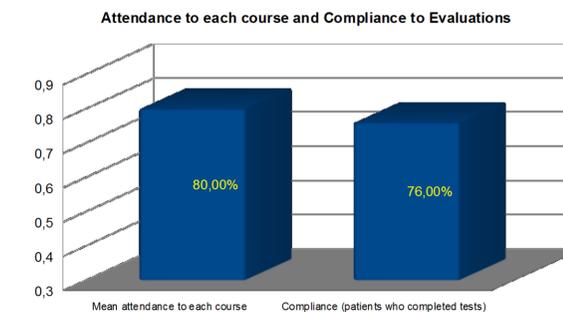
Hospital Anxiety-Depression Scale (HADS): 14 items (min 0-max 21)  
 Distress Thermometer (DT): visual (min 0-max 10)  
 Facit Fatigue Scale: 13 items (min 0-max 52)

## Results

Patients attended 80% of the session; 19/25 completed both basal and final tests, therefore 76% of them are evaluable. At baseline mean scores observed for each item were: Anxiety 9 (95% CI: 7.2-10.8); Depression 7.7 (95% CI: 5.7-9.8); Distress 6.1 (95% CI: 4.9-7.4) and Fatigue 16.3 (95% CI: 12.5-20.0). **After having attended the AT course, significant advantages were seen in Anxiety, Depression and Distress but not in Fatigue.** For Anxiety there was a 2.3 score improvement (p=0.0066); for Depression there was a gain of 2.3 points (p=0.0089); Distress was reduced by 2.1 points (p=0.0181); Fatigue showed a non significant increase of 1 point (p=0.52). Moreover patients shared their feelings with the trainer, writing down some thoughts that reflected an inner pathway devoted to 1) relieve guilt feelings 2) accept their body without judgement 3) empower themselves.



Fig. 1 -AUTOGENIC TRAINING SESSION



### Additional observations:

- 1) relieve guilty feelings
- 2) accept their body without judgement
- 3) empower themselves.

## Conclusions

AT, a well accepted, low cost and recognized method, can enable psychologists to induce an introspective work, in cancer patients, able to decrease mood disturbances and distress. These patients had "high" basal HADS and DT scores but a "low level" of fatigue. Such characteristics, together with the small sample size, may have prevented us to show a significant effect of Autogenous Training on fatigue.



## Bibliography

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