

## Affective expression in organic and functional gastrointestinal disease

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Verbal affective expression and psychometric variables were studied in a group of 5 duodenal ulcer and 6 irritable bowel patients. The aim was to assess the relevance of the alexithymia construct to the distinction between both groups. Irritable bowel patients exhibited higher scores on Zung's depressiveness scale. Alexithymia scores were significantly higher for duodenal ulcer patients. Regarding verbal affective expression a discrimination was possible between both groups in the scale of hostility directed inward. Ulcer patients expressed less affect. These findings suggest that a distinction is possible at the behavioral level between patients with functional vs. patients with organic gastrointestinal illness, thus rendering the concept of alexithymia relevant to this nosological categorization.