Cluster analysis of endometriosis patients in an outpatient education programme

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Objectives
The complexity of endometriosis and its diverse physical, emotional and social medical impacts pose major problems not only for the patient but also for the physician. Women with endometriosis differ greatly in terms of coping-strategies. The present study aimed to identify different patient groups to improve care.

Methods
The population of a study on the development and implementation of an outpatient education programme for women with endometriosis served as the basis of the analysis. Two-step cluster analysis was performed to identify three clusters based on the variables “age”, “disease duration”, and “delayed diagnosis”. A unifactorial variance analysis variance (ANOVA) was used for comparison of mean values.

Results
In total, 115 cases were included in the three clusters. The first cluster was a group of 44 women characterized by the highest mean age (44 years) and the longest duration of disease (13 years). Deep exhaustion was the most important symptom in this group. The second cluster consisted of a subgroup with a mean age of 36 years and a disease duration of 3.4 years. These patients had the highest pain scores and the worse quality of life scores. The most striking feature in this group was the extremely long delay in diagnosis, amounting to 16 years on average. The third cluster consisted of young women (31 years) with a short duration of disease (3.4 years) and a short delay in diagnosis (2.1 years) who had a problem-oriented approach to dealing with the disease.

Summary
We expect that the analysis of psychological comorbidities at the 12-months-follow-up will show starting points to produce strategies for more selective treatment of endometriosis. In particular, it is crucial to identify “difficult” patients in Cluster 2 early and to ensure that they receive specific services.