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CANNABIS ABUSE AT FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS (FEP): DATA FROM MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES IN MODENA AND BOLOGNA, ITALY

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Aims: To evaluate the clinical and functional effects of cannabis abuse in patients at First Episode Psychosis (FEP) referring to Community Mental Health Centre (CMHC) "Bologna Ovest" and in patients admitted with a diagnosis of psychosis at the Modena Emergency Psychiatry Ward (EPW).

Method: All FEP patients, aged 18-35, referring to CMCH "Bologna Ovest" in a 6-years period were evaluated and followed-up at 3 and 12 months. Of the 1559 psychiatric admissions at the Modena EPW in a 3-year period, those with a positive history for substance abuse were selected.

Results: Among the 88 Bologna Ovest FEPs, 32% were cannabis abusers (FEP-c). In Bologna, FEP-c were more frequently natives (23.39% vs 31.13%; $c\ sq=5.1$; $p=0.02$) single (26.38% vs 0.0% $c\ sq=7.3$, $p=0.007$) and unemployed (13.50% vs 18.32%, $c\ sq=2.4$, $p=0.1$). Non FEP-c did not use any other drug (0.0% vs 26.1%, $c\ sq=77.5$; $p< 0.001$). A trend towards higher prevalence of hospital admission at follow-up was found for FEP-c (4.20% vs 2.4%, $c\ sq=3.8$, $p=0.07$). 22.0% of patients admitted at the Modena EPW had a positive history for substance abuse: of these, 7% were diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, which significantly correlated with the use of cannabinoids (alone or in association).

Discussion: Our results enlighten that cannabis use is frequent among psychotic patients admitted to hospital and worsens clinical course of FEP patients, consistently with previous evidence (Hambrecht & Hafner, 1996; Hafner et al., 2004).