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Social Representations of Schizophrenia in the General Population and in a Population of Schizophrenic Patients

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Introduction: Social representations can give meaning to our beliefs, opinions and representations of the world; they assume an adjustment function to our membership groups and determine our behavior.

Objective: To compare social representations of schizophrenia in a sample of schizophrenic patients and in the general population.

Method: This is a comparative study between patients with schizophrenia and a sample of the general population.

A semi-structured interview was undertaken around three questions.

The first issue of "mental illness names you know" is to gather the terms associated with the subject to the representation of mental disorders.

The following questions: "you think of when the term schizophrenia?" and "How does schizophrenia manifest?" designed to make the representations of schizophrenia emerge.

Results: We performed this study on a group of 20 schizophrenic patients and a group of 20 subjects from the general population.

We found that the sample of general population considers the schizophrenic as a person with faults and not just "crazy." We find no significant difference between our two groups regarding stigmatizing representations of the disorder.

Indeed, we found that control subjects have a greater variety in the terms used, and many patients are not aware of the name of the disease from which they suffer. Regarding the description of the manifestations of the disease, positive symptoms are most frequently cited by patients as well as control subjects.

Conclusion: This result highlights the important role of the practitioner in patient education and stresses the need working on representations associated with schizophrenia.