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SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION IN A TUNISIAN SAMPLE OF DRUG FREE SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS: A CASE-CONTROL-STUDY

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Introduction: Sexual dysfunction is reported by up to 80% of schizophrenic patients and seems to be mainly associated with antipsychotic medications.

Objective: This study aimed to compare sexual functioning and sexual dysfunction, as assessed by the Arizona Sexual Experience Scale, in drug naïve or drug free schizophrenic patients and in healthy controls.

Method: A consecutive sample of 109 patients meeting DSM-IV criteria of schizophrenia was constituted in psychiatry department of Sousse Farhat Hached hospital (Tunisia), during a 24 months period. They were drug naïve or drug free for at least three months. 109 age and gender matched, consenting controls were recruited among blood donors attending Farhat Hached hospital during the same period. They were free from psychotic disorders as screened by MINI-Plus. Sexual functioning was assessed using the Arizona Sexual Experience Scale (ASEX) in sexually active patients (N=84) and controls (N=94).

Results: There were no statistical differences in sexual dysfunction rates between schizophrenic patients (20.6%) and healthy controls (13.1%), according to usual threshold values. Also, global ASEX score was similar in schizophrenic patients ( $12.93 \pm 4.48$ ) as in healthy controls ( $12.61 \pm 2.60$ ). Besides, different ASEX item scores including sex drive, arousal, vaginal lubrication/penile erection and orgasm have not shown any differences between patients and controls. Only sexual satisfaction score was higher in schizophrenic patients than in healthy controls ( $2.73 \pm 0.95$  vs.  $2.43 \pm 0.77$ ;  $p=0.02$ ).

Conclusion: Our results showed a low rate of sexual dysfunction in drug free schizophrenic patients without statistical differences with healthy controls. Only sexual satisfaction was lower in schizophrenic patients.