

The general acceptance of eugenic utopias amongst the medical profession during the Weimar Republic prepared the sterilisation law and the killing of thousands of psychiatric patients.

S38.2

Attitudes towards genetic research in psychiatry

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Objective: It is expected that susceptibility mutations for mental disorders will be discovered in near future. This could generate controversies about how this findings may be used. It is possible to imagine stigmatization of individuals based on genotypes. The purpose of this study is to learn about knowledge and attitudes toward genetic research.

Method: In a group of patients (n=100), psychiatrists (n=100) and students (n=100) we are assessing the attitudes, fears and knowledge regarding psychiatric genetics.

Results: Preliminary results indicate the great interest but also fears to genetic research in psychiatry. The most recent results will be presented at the meeting.

- (1) Elliot S.Gershon: Bipolar illness and schizophrenia as oligogenic diseases: implications for future. *Biol. Psychiatry*, 200,47,240–244.

S38.3

The attitudes of Turkish psychiatrists towards the genetics of mental illnesses

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Background: Prejudges about mental illnesses could negatively influence its prognosis by decreasing accessibility to treatment resources. However, early recognition and treatment intervention may improve the outcome and minimise the disabilities.

The results of recent researches on the genetics contributed to the comprehension of pathogenesis and aetiology of mental disorders. The identification of susceptibility genes for mental illnesses may cause a more biological concept of the disease, which may lead to either a decrease or an increase of stigmatisation of patients. The progresses in the genetic of mental disorders spontaneously reveal also some ethical questions that clinician will have to resolve in the future. Opinions of clinicians will be very important to guide future genetic researches and their clinical applications. In Turkey, there exist approximately 1200 psychiatrists in total who practice in 120 institutions and private offices. The number of psychiatrist per 100000 is found less than 1 based on the data of WHO. We are conducting a nation-wide representative survey to assess the attitudes and expectations and fears of Turkish psychiatrists towards psychiatric genetics research and its clinical applications e.g. predictive genetic testing.

Method: We requested to psychiatrists to fill the Turkish version of Gen-Ethics Questionnaire. The questionnaire has been recently developed in Rheinische Friedrich- Wilhelms- Bonn University, Department of Psychiatry. It consists of 10 different parts: social-demographic information of the psychiatrist, his contact with people suffering from mental illnesses, his knowledge about chronic mental illnesses, his opinions on genetic investigation and on when to carry out genetic examinations, on access to genetic information, his acceptance of mentally ill people in the community, his opinions on abortions and moral values.

Results: Our survey is ongoing and most recent results about the opinions and attitudes of psychiatrists towards genetics of mental illnesses and the future researches will be presented.

S38.4

Informed consent, confidentiality and ethical votes – experience from a multinational psychiatric genetic study

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No abstract was available at the time of printing.

S38.5

The legal protection of biotechnological inventions

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The European Directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions (98/44/EC) was issued in order to remove legal uncertainty resulting from different national patent laws and to maintain the internal market's principles. The deadline for implementation was June 2000, but not all of the EU-Member States supported the transposition in national laws. Though the European directive clarifies the applying of fundamental principles about patenting of biotechnological inventions, several Member States expressed an extremely critical view of it. They called for its renegotiation without delay at European level, because the Directive would allow "patents on life". Patent laws, however, are the appropriate instrument to implement bioethical demands: An exclusive right encourages research into biotechnological processes which are needed to combat diseases. It forces public information and allows it to be used in further research. Moreover a patent does not confer any right of ownership on the object being patented and does not authorize its holder to implement the invention in an abusive manner. Accordingly the Directive avoids patentability of inventions whose industrial applications are contrary to "ordre public or morality".

S39. Dimensional approaches to schizotypy and psychosis

Chairs: C.N. Stefanis (GR), L. Fañanás (E)

S39.1

Dimensional versus categorical models of psychosis: is there any definitive evidence?

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A controversy that has plagued psychosis for some time is whether 'psychosis' constructs are better represented by dimensional or categorical models. There is a growing consensus that continuum models of psychosis have superior clinical advantages and validity than categorical models but no definitive evidence has been reported.

Several methods to account for by this nosological problem have been proposed, such as factor analysis and cluster techniques. These techniques have shown great limitations and two other

statistical analyses have been proposed: Admixture analysis and Maximum Covariance Analysis. The latter approach was developed by Meehl and Golden (1982) and comprised several taxometric methods for the purpose of detecting the existence of a latent class variable. No previous studies have been reported on symptoms of psychosis.

In the current study taxometric procedures were applied to 10 psychotic symptoms from the SAPS and the SANS symptoms. A sample of 660 consecutive admissions for acute psychotic episode was analyzed. The results are more consistent with the hypothesis that symptoms of psychosis are better characterised as a dimensional construct.

S39.2

Evidence that three dimensions of psychosis have a distribution in the general population

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Background: The aims of the study were: i) to examine, using clinical symptoms of patients as a template, whether the correlated but independent dimensions of positive, negative and depressive symptoms that have been identified in clinical psychosis, also have a distribution as non-clinical experiences in the general population, and ii) to establish to what degree population variation in experience of positive and negative features of psychosis is actually independent of experience of depression.

Method: In a representative population sample of 932 young men, we measured experiences of positive, negative and depressive features of psychosis, using a 40-item self-report instrument. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to compare the fit of hypothesised one-, two- and three factor solutions.

Results: A three-factor model of separate depressive, positive and negative dimensions provided a better fit to the data than either a two-factor or unidimensional model. All three dimensions were correlated with each other, but also showed good discriminant validity in relation to established scales, confirming their relative independence.

Conclusion: The data suggest that the correlated dimensions of clinical psychosis also have a distribution in the general population, and that depressive symptoms may form an integral part of the experience of psychosis.

S39.3

Schizotypy and neurocognitive deficits in a non-clinical population

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Weaker phenotypes of psychosis exist in the general population. It would be therefore of interest to explore the potential association between sub-clinical dimensions of schizotypy and neurocognitive markers for schizophrenia in non-clinical populations. As part of the ASPIS (Athens Study of Psychosis Proneness and Incidence of Schizophrenia), 1413 apparently healthy young conscripts undergoing their obligatory military service completed two self-rated schizotypy scales, the SPQ (Schizotypal Personality Questionnaire) and the PAS (Perceptual Aberration Scale). Neurocognitive performance was evaluated with computerised tasks of sustained

attention ability (CPT-IP), verbal and spatial working memory (N-BACK). Regression analysis revealed that state psychopathology (SCL 90R) and deficits in CPT-IP performance, but not deficits in working memory, had a significant effect on the "negative" schizotypy factor scores of the SPQ. This may indicate that young adults, who experience severe interpersonal difficulties and social isolation, have primarily an encoding cognitive impairment in information processing. In contrast, deficits in spatial working memory, but not in sustained attention, or verbal working memory had a significant effect on PAS, indicating subtle functional prefrontal cortex impairment in apparently healthy young males who endorse aberrant body perceptual experiences.

S39.4

Antisaccade and smooth eye pursuit in a sample of 2000 young males

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During the last 30 years a growing literature has focused on the study of eye movements in schizophrenic patients. Smooth eye pursuit and antisaccade abnormalities in these patients as well as in their first-degree relatives resulted in the consideration of eye movement performance indexes as potential biological markers for the identification of psychosis prone individuals. We have concluded the first part of a prospective study measuring eye movement indexes in a sample of 2000 conscripts of the Greek Air Force with the aim of identifying their potential as predisposing factors for the later development of psychosis. The conscripts also completed a battery of cognitive and psychometric evaluation tests. The analysis of the database so far showed that antisaccade as well as smooth eye pursuit performance was very weakly if at all correlated with schizotypy in this population as this was measured using the Perceptual Aberration Scale (PAS) and the Schizotypal Personality Questionnaire (SPQ) and the Symptom Checklist 90-R. The large variability of the normal performance and its implications in the study of eye movements in psychosis is discussed.

S39.5

Developmental instability in schizotypy and psychosis

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It has been suggested that presence of markers of prenatal disturbance as minor physical anomalies and alteration of expected symmetries in schizophrenia should be understood from the perspective of developmental instability. Genes and intrauterine environmental factors have been involved in the origin of the disturbed neurodevelopment of these patients. Study of dermatoglyphic variables (a-b ridge count and fluctuating asymmetry from the a-b) and dermatoglyphic abnormalities may constitute enduring evidence of a prenatal insult occurred during the first or second trimester of intrauterine life. The aim of the communication is to present some recent studies showing the relation found between these markers and i) psychosis, in samples of psychotic and healthy twins, ii) schizotypy, in individuals from the general population. The high frequency of dermatoglyphic anomalies found in the affected twins compared to the healthy suggested that environmental factors acting early during pregnancy contribute towards the liability to develop psychosis later. High levels of fluctuating asymmetry were associated with the negative dimension of schizotypy suggesting early developmental instability. It is interesting to remark the detection of