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Integrative index of quality of life and its possibilities in diagnosis and therapy of patients with schizophrenia

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Objects of the investigations were 49 patients with chronic paranoid schizophrenia (average age was 39,4; 31 male and 18 female patients; duration of the disease was 12±4,1 years). 32 healthy persons were examined as a control group.

In the complex of methods of the study the clinico-pathopsychological method, PANSS and MADRS scales, Integrative Index of Quality of Life (IIQL) (J. Mezzich et al., 1999) were used. A peculiarity of our methodical approach was IIQL not only from patient's positions but also from positions of his/her relatives and physicians, thus during course of the study a triple assessment was being performed.

Results of the study demonstrated that the IIQL in patients with paranoid schizophrenia was lower significantly as compared with healthy persons ($3,1 \pm 0,7$; $p < 0,05$). The lowest indexes were for scales of physical well-being, ability to work, personal interactions, social and professional support. For scales of psychological well-being, personal and spiritual self-realization it was pointed out a significant dissociation between rates of patients, relatives and physicians, as relatives and physicians made lower rates for these indexes as compared with patients' ones. During course of treatment (Risperidol in an average dose of 2,6 mg per day during 3 months) it was observed significant positive dynamics both for clinical conditions (supported by PANSS and MADRS scales results) and for the IIQL (statistically significant increasing of rates for scales of psychological well-being, personal interactions and personal self-realization).

The results obtained demonstrate a perspective of usage of the IIQL for diagnosis, assessment of a therapy efficacy and rehabilitation of patients with schizophrenia.

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Left eyedness is associated with a disproportionate birth weight/birth length ratio in schizophrenia

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Objectives: Since an atypical leftward shift of both hand and eyedness has been found in schizophrenic patients, we wanted to study pre- and perinatal adverse events (known to be overrepresented in schizophrenic patients) in relation to measures of laterality, in a sample of patients with schizophrenia.

Methods: Fifty schizophrenic patients have been examined for handedness, footedness and eyedness. Birth records and data on demographic variables have been collected.

Results: Patients with a disproportionate birth weight/birth length ratio were significantly more often left eyed. No significant results concerning handedness or footedness were found.

Conclusions: Birth weight/birth length ratio is an estimate of intrauterine growth rate, and we hypothesize that intrauterine stress events may influence eyedness in schizophrenia.

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Body composition changes in patients with schizophrenia

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Objectives: Changes in weight, blood glucose and lipid levels have been noticed in patients treated with atypical neuroleptics. To determine whether patients with schizophrenia also show alterations in body composition bio-impedance and caliper assessments were performed.

Method: Body composition variables were measured with a multi-frequency bio-impedance analyser in 21 patients with DSM-IV diagnosed schizophrenia, of whom 6 were unmedicated, and 17 sex- and age-matched healthy controls. Water in fat free mass (WFFM) was calculated with a three-compartment model (Forslund et al. 1996)

Results: The mean percentage of WFFM was 69,7 in patients and 71,5 in controls ($p=0,024$). The balance of intra- and extracellular water also differed; the mean intracellular compartment of body water was 56,7 % in the patients and 58,8 % in the controls ($p=0,048$). There were no significant differences in BMI or percentage of fat between the two groups.

Conclusion: A lowered %WFFM as well as changes in the distribution of intracellular and extracellular fluid was found in patients with schizophrenia. The cause of body composition changes is unknown but the role of neuroleptics must be further elucidated.

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Ziprasidone vs olanzapine in schizophrenia: a 6-month extension study

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Objective: To compare the long-term efficacy and tolerability of ziprasidone and olanzapine in schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder.

Methods: In a six-month blinded continuation study, initially hospitalized patients who completed a six-week randomized trial (World J Bio Psychiatry 2(1): abstract PI021-27) with satisfactory clinical response (CGI-I < or = 2 or > or = 20% reduction in symptom severity as measured by PANSS Total score) and who were discharged remained on olanzapine 5–15 mg QD ($n=71$) or ziprasidone 40–80 mg BID ($n=62$). Primary efficacy measures were BPRS and CGI-S; secondary variables included PANSS total and Positive and Negative Subscale Scores. Tolerability assessments included measurement of fasting lipids, insulin, and glucose and weight.

Results: Ziprasidone and olanzapine did not differ significantly in changes from baseline (ie, baseline of six-week study) to endpoint (Month 6 or LOCF) in BPRS, CGI-S, or PANSS Total or Subscale Scores. Significant increases in weight and BMI, LDL cholesterol, insulin, and glucose were observed with olanzapine but not ziprasidone.

Conclusion: Ziprasidone and olanzapine demonstrated comparable antipsychotic efficacy in long-term treatment. Olanzapine but

not ziprasidone exhibited sustained weight gain and deleterious metabolic effects.

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Patient knowledge about schizophrenia and treatment compliance

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Patient non-compliance is the main cause of relapses in schizophrenia, responsible for at least half of rehospitalizations. The aim of the study was to evaluate patient compliance with pharmacotherapy in the six months prior to schizophrenic relapse. The second step was a determination of the relationship between treatment compliance and patient knowledge about the disease. Studied group was composed of 60 patients with the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia (according to DSM-IV) admitted to psychiatric departments due to relapse. Data were collected by constructed questionnaires. Detailed information about the compliance with pharmacotherapy was obtained from patients, their families and doctors. Medical documentation was revised. Patient knowledge about schizophrenia was examined after mental state stabilization. 51.7 % of participants did not comply properly with the pharmacotherapy in the six months prior to relapse. Patient knowledge areas important for a proper treatment compliance, based on the comparison of groups with good and poor compliance, are the following: causes of the disease, the everyday health-promoting habits, patient–doctor cooperation and the pharmacotherapy rules.

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Neuropsychological function in schizophrenia

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Neuropsychology is the scientific study of the relationships between brain functions and behavior. In the neuropsychological domain within the HUBIN project data from patients and healthy controls are collected, concerning fundamental psychological functions such as attention, learning and memory, as well as more complex functions such as planning, problem solving and behavior control: executive functions. The first aim of this domain is the collaboration with other projects within HUBIN (genetics, MRI, and others) in order to collect neuropsychological data in patients and controls, which will then be analyzed in relation to genetic, brain morphological and other data from the different projects. Data are mainly the results from psychological tests. Patients with schizophrenia are known to exhibit different types of neuropsychological impairments, which has been shown to be more important for functional outcome than symptom type and symptom intensity during the psychotic episodes. The clinical importance of neuropsychological function thus is well established. Neuropsychology also contributes to the theoretical understanding of the emergence of psychotic symptoms, within the framework of the vulnerability-stress-model, where neuro-psychological impairments are regarded as factors of vulnerability. The results from patients and controls in standardised neuropsychological tests of attentional, cognitive and executive functions will be presented and relationships with other data domains in the HUBIN data base will be discussed.

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Gender and clinical symptoms in schizophrenia

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Objective: There is evidence that the presentation and clinical course of schizophrenia differs between men and women. The aim of this study is to address the question of whether there are gender differences in clinical symptoms and functioning among first-admitted (FA) or relapsed (RE) acute schizophrenic inpatients.

Methods: Twenty-eight FA (17 men, 11 women) and fifty-two RE (33 men, 19 women) schizophrenic patients consecutively admitted at Eginition Hospital, Athens, were included in the study. All patients were diagnosed on the basis of DSM-IV criteria. Patients were assessed on admission using the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) and the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale (GAF). There were no statistically significant differences between men and women schizophrenics regarding age, education, employment status, reason of admission and duration of illness.

Results: Men and women FA schizophrenics were differentiated in that women schizophrenics more often presented with passive-apathetic social withdrawal (45% vs 12%, p<0.05). There were no significant differences between male and female FA or RE acute schizophrenic inpatients regarding the severity of positive, negative or general symptoms, the frequency of symptoms or the level of functioning.

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Plasma concentrations of amino acids in chronic schizophrenics

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Objectives: Peripheral amino acid changes have been reported in schizophrenia, but results are not consistent. We measured serum levels of different amino acids in schizophrenic patients before and after clozapine treatment.

Methods: Eleven neuroleptic resistant schizophrenics and 11 age- and sex-matched healthy controls were included in the study. Patients were treated with clozapine (mean + SD daily dose 318 + 130 mg). Aminoacid plasma levels were measured by high-performance liquid chromatography.

Results: Schizophrenic patients exhibited significantly higher levels of serum aspartate, glutamate, isoleucine, istidine and tyrosine, significantly lower concentrations of serum asparagine, tryptophan and serine. In patients, the ratio between tryptophan and large neutral amino acids (LNAA) was significantly lower than in matched controls, whereas the tyrosine/LNAA ratio did not differ significantly. Moreover, 12 weeks clozapine administration significantly reduced serum levels of glutamate without affecting other amino acid concentrations.

Conclusions: These data show changes in serum amino acids that may influence central serotonergic, dopaminergic, and glutamatergic transmission in neuroleptic-resistant schizophrenics.