

The core symptom of dementia is intellectual impairment which leads to difficulties or incapacity of the suffering patients to decide relevant topics on their own. Important areas are the consent to diagnosis, treatment or hospital and nursing home admission, as well as testamentary and financial decisions, advance directives, participation in research and driving licence.

The (empirical) database is scarce. In addition, throughout Europe, legal and social conditions vary widely with only few (recently developed) laws taking the dementia problem into account. In some countries regular health checks in the elderly are already established at least with regard to driving license. Up to now the discussion is ongoing, whether these checks are really helpful or “expression” of ageistic attitudes in the (medical) society.

As a first step we performed a survey and approached national experts for dementia to answer a short questionnaire. It included questions concerning the main topics of testamentary and financial competence, informed consent, advance directives and driving. Representatives of 17 European countries answered and the results were discussed on an interdisciplinary (lawyers, legal medicine specialist, neuropsychologist, psychiatrist) expert workshop. The results and a preliminary consensus are presented.

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Representative follow up investigations of primary care physicians competence for the management of memory disorders in Germany

G. Stoppe, S. Haak, A. Knoblauch, L. Maeck. *University Psychiatric Hospital, Basel, Switzerland*

Introduction: Primary care physicians are in the key position for early recognition and management of memory disorders. The study investigates their competence for this task longitudinally.

Method: Written case vignettes on slight memory disorders (case 1) and moderate dementia (case 2) were presented to primary care physicians in their practices in 1993 and 2001. A standardised open interview was performed and the psychosocial focus remained secret.

Results: Both studies were representative with response rates of 82.1% (n=145) and 71.8% (n=122). From 1993 to 2001 the rate of dementia diagnoses increased and those of vascular encephalopathy/organic brain disease decreased significantly. However, overall rates for diagnosis of Alzheimer dementia remained at about 25% for primary and 50% for differential diagnostic considerations. Vascular diagnoses kept dominating. The diagnostic tools showed a significant increase of the use of neuropsychological screening tests and of thyroid screen in moderate dementia. Neuroimaging would be applied significantly by significantly less physicians (<20%). Antidementia drug prescriptions decreased dramatically mainly regarding the conventional nootropics. Cholinesterase Inhibitors would be prescribed by less than 10% of the physicians. However, knowledge on psychosocial help increased significantly.

Discussion: Competence changes over time can be investigated with this method. Primary care physicians' competence remains too low without systematic training. Especially Alzheimer's dementia will not be early recognized and adequate treated.

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Active allothetic place avoidance task: evaluation of new and promising behavioral approach to testing spatial cognitive abilities of rodents.

A. Stuchlik¹, L. Rehakova^{1,2}, D. Cinkova^{1,2}, V. Helesic^{1,2}, L. Rezacova^{1,2}, K. Vales¹. ¹ *Institute of Physiology, Academy of*

Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic ² *Faculty of Sciences, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic*

Spatial cognition has long been subject to intensive study of researchers as a model of higher cognitive functions in humans. Animal navigation to directly imperceptible goals is believed to require creating internal representations of environments, which are sometimes called “cognitive maps”. Recently, a novel, spatial cognition task named active allothetic place avoidance (AAPA) was introduced, which requires allothetic mapping and cognitive coordination.

We studied effect of several receptor ligands on the efficiency of performance in the AAPA. D1-like receptor antagonist SCH23390, D2-like antagonist sulpiride, muscarinic antagonist scopolamine, and NMDA receptor antagonist MK-801 was injected 20 min prior to testing in the AAPA. All substances disrupted AAPA learning, in some cases, drug-induced hyper- or hypolocomotion contributed to the behavioral impairment. For future exploitation of the AAPA in testing cognitive abilities of animals, it is necessary to develop a control avoidance conditions similarly to cued vs. visible platforms versions of the Morris water maze. This condition would allow to dissociate cognitive disruption from the sensorimotor and motivational impairments.

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Fearing insanity... charles bonnet syndrome - case study

V. Teixeira Sousa, A. Costa, M. Mota, R. Grangeia, A. Pacheco Palha. *Department of Psychiatry, Hospital de São João, Oporto, Portugal*

Notwithstanding the curiosity that it raises in the psychiatric community, the Charles Bonnet Syndrome is still an entity of poor defined contexts, especially in what concerns to its therapeutic management. It consists in complex visual hallucinations in visually impaired patients that possess insight into the unreality of their visual experiences and have no past history of major psychiatric disturbances or cognitive impairment. This syndrome is sub-diagnosed and, perhaps for that, is considered rare. The prevalence of complex visual hallucinations in patients with diminished visual acuity varies between 0,4 and 15%; reports from different authors point to an average of around 10%. The most consensual theory about the origin of the hallucinations is that they result from a process of de-afferentation of the visual association areas of the cerebral cortex, leading to a phenomenon called “phantom vision”.

The present communication focus on the clinical case of a 65 years-old women, retired, divorced, socially isolated, with no previous major psychiatric disturbances or cognitive impairment. Her visual deficits resulted from complications of severe myopia. In the past year, she has started with visual complex hallucinations, in the form of people, animals and scenes, without special personal meaning. The patient lives this phenomenon with severe distress.

Neuroimaging study failed to find any abnormality. Treatment started with risperidone, carbamazepine and psychotherapy based on reassurance and counselling, to witch there was partial response.

The authors emphasize particular clinical aspects and management of this case and present main data published in literature about Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

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The use of non-stimulant drugs in the treatment of adult ADHD

W. Verbeeck, S. Tuinier. *Vincent Van Gogh Institute, Venray, The Netherlands*

Background: To date, psychostimulants constitute the most efficacious drugs in the treatment of ADHD with variable response rates

ranging from 25% to 76%. Although remarkably safe, stimulant treatment is associated with potential shortcomings. Furthermore, adults with ADHD often suffer from concurrent disorders (anxiety, depression, tics and drug dependence) and stimulants are potentially abusable. Therefore a variety of alternative non-stimulants medications have been explored.

Methods: All available controlled trials of non-stimulants in adults ADHD patients were retrieved from Pubmed, PsycInfo and Mbase.

Results: Only 17 controlled trials have been published. The compounds used are: desipramine, atomoxetine, modafinil, nicotine, ABT 418, guanfacine, selegiline, bupropion, lithium and pycnogenol. Effects seen in uncontrolled studies are in general better than in well designed RCT's. Apart from trials with atomoxetine and bupropion the sample sizes are small. Most studies exclude patients with comorbid disorders, so that the study sample differs considerably from that in clinical practice. Most studies do not include assessment from significant others and some report improvement on a variety of neuropsychological measurements of executive functioning which cannot be translated into better daily functioning.

Conclusion: So far the non-stimulants are still hampered by their inferior effect size compared to stimulants, the need for daily dosing to maintain their clinical efficacy and a delay in the onset of their clinical effects.

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The disturbed parent-child communication after parental separation and its impact on the child's psychosocial adjustment

A. Beka. *Department of Psychiatry for Children and Adolescents, Thessaloniki, Greece*

In the present study we attempted to investigate the relationship between two parameters: (a) the disturbed communication between separated or divorced parents and their children, and (b) the psychosocial adaptation of the children. Moreover, we attempted to understand the impact of legal and judicial orders re child-related issues on the children's psychosocial development.

63 children and their divorced parents were studied in order to investigate the impact of (a) disturbed parent-child communication and (b) increased parental litigation re custody and access, on the child's psychosocial development. Parents and children were administered self-completed questionnaires, while semi-structured interviews were used with children. Measures of psychosocial adjustment included psychiatric diagnoses according to DSM-IV, with emphasis in Global Assessment Functioning in the 5th axis, as well as the Social Adjustment Scale (M. Weissman, 1975) and the Self-Esteem Index for Children (J. Battle, 1981). Results showed that, as for the custodial parent, the better the communication with him the better the child's adjustment and the higher his self-esteem, while, as for the non-custodial parent, the more frequent and the better the quality of communication with him, the better the child's adjustment, but not the higher its self-esteem. Finally, contrary to our hypothesis, the more parents litigated the better the child's psychosocial adjustment and the higher its self-esteem. In conclusion, the disturbed parent-child communication after parental divorce constitutes a significant risk factor for poor psychosocial development of the child.

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Forensic-psychiatric meaning of paranoid conditions with personality disorders

S.V. Danilova. *Serbsky Centre for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, Moscow, Russia*

The aim of the study is to specify criteria of expert evaluation of patients diagnosed as having Personality Disorders who have committed criminal offences. These patients have had paranoid ideas: supervaluable (überwertige idea by Wernicke), dominant pathological, paranoid delusional ideas.

115 patients (105 men, 10 women) have been examined in the study. Age: 20-69 years old. Diagnosis of Personality Disorders have been established according to the diagnostic criteria of the International Classification of Diseases, Traumas and Cause of Deaths: ICD-10 and also to the Classification of the American Psychiatric Association: DSM-IV. Diagnosis of Paranoid Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder were most common (73%).

The study has revealed that paranoid ideas have arisen after the prolonged psychological stress (infringement of family relations, job conflicts, unemployment and etc). Contents of the paranoid ideas (jealousy, querulous ideas, persecution ideas, and hypochondria) depended on characteristic of the stress.

Established: Patients who have had supervaluable ideas were responsible for their offences. Contents of the supervaluable ideas did not influence upon their criminal actions. These ideas were concrete, did not tend to expand and existed for a short time. Affective dominant ideas reflected the situation of criminal action. The patients could not forecast the consequence of their actions, so it was furnish condition. Patients with paranoid delusional ideas were considered to be irresponsible.

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Intervention strategies for stalking victims

H. Dressing, E. Schiefelbein, P. Gass. *Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit, Mannheim, Germany*

Background: Research on the effectiveness of different intervention strategies for stalking victims is scarce.

Aims: To present the "Mannheim Pilot Project on Stalking" that aims at linking-up different local activities for stalking victims.

Methods: An information centre at the prevention directorate of the police station and a cognitive group therapy for stalking victims were established.

Data of this research project are outlined.

Results: Requirements of stalkers are better complied with. Group therapy reduces stress and enables victims to cope with their problems more adequately.

More research on the effects of different interventions strategies is needed.

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Assessing the therapeutic process with the forensic operationalized therapy/risk evaluation system (FOTRES)

J. Endrass, C. Danielsson, F. Urbanik. *Crime Prevention Research Unit, Psychiatric/Psychological Service, Justice Department, Zurich, Switzerland*

Forensic prognostic instruments assess an offender's risk of re-offending. Thus they assign offenders to risk categories, which contain a certain probability of recidivism within a certain period of time after release from prison. Most instruments however do not