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Schneider's First Rank Symptoms in Relation to Religious Delusion

M. Lazarescu¹, M. Hurmuz², A.M. Draghici¹, J. Blajovan¹

¹Psychiatry, "Eduard Pamfil" Psychiatric Clinic, Timisoara, Romania ; ²Psychiatry, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Targu-Mures, Romania

Introduction. There are only a few studies focusing on the religious delusion in relation to Schneider's first rank symptoms, compared to the presence of these symptoms in paranoid delusions.

Objective. This study aims to explore the particularities of Schneider's first rank symptoms in relation to religious delusion.

Material and method. The study included 40 subjects with religious delusions. The cases were chosen from the Case Register of Psychoses of the Psychiatric Clinic in Timisoara and they have been followed longitudinally during a 15 year period. All of them had a stable 5 year ICD-10 diagnosis of Schizophrenia, Schizo-affective disorder or Persistent delusional disorder. The following variables were considered: demographic parameters (at onset and at present), clinical and evolutionary aspects (including the number of relapses and the diagnostic stability) and psychopathological parameters regarding the variety of psychotic symptoms and the patient's interpretation of Schneider's first rank symptoms. The symptomatology was assessed using a method derived from the SCAN instrument and the data were analyzed qualitatively.

Results. Differences between the subjects' experiences of first rank symptoms in relation to paranoid delusions and religious delusions were observed. The subjects experiencing religious delusions often interpreted the first rank symptoms as being common, normal experiences.

Conclusions. In religious delusion, Schneider's first rank symptoms are accepted and interpreted by the patient as common actions of supernatural beings, especially in schizo-affective episodes, being different from the interpretation of these symptoms when in relation to paranoid delusions.