

SOCIAL PHOBIA IN NON-DEMENTED 75- AND 85-YEAR OLDS. ASSOCIATED FACTORS

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Introduction: Social phobia is one of the most common psychiatric disorders. There is a lack of knowledge on the relationship between social phobia and cognitive functioning among older adults.

Aim: To examine cognitive functioning, prevalence and psychiatric comorbidity of social phobia in an elderly population.

Methods: A general population sample of non-demented 75-year olds (N=768) and 85-year olds (N=432) was investigated in 2005-2006 (75-year olds) and 2009-2010 (85-year olds) by psychiatric nurses. The procedure was identical with semi-structured psychiatric examinations including the Comprehensive Psychopathological Rating Scale, and the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview. Social phobia was diagnosed according to the DSM-IV criteria. Cognitive function was measured with the Mini-Mental State Examination, and eight different psychometric tests measuring short- and long-term memory, non-verbal memory, logical reasoning, visuospatial and executive ability.

Results: The one-month prevalence of social phobia was 2.5% (N=30), this was more common among women than among men (3.2% vs. 1.3%). Individuals with social phobia more often had major depression compared to individuals without symptoms of social phobia (33.3% vs. 4.3%). MMSE-score did not differ between individuals with and without social phobia. Individuals with social phobia had worse visuospatial and executive ability measured with Clock Test, compared to individuals with no symptoms of social phobia.

Conclusions: Our results indicate that social phobia is not unusual in old age and that comorbidity with depression is common. Social phobia does not have an impact on global cognitive functioning. Social phobia influenced visuospatial and executive ability but not performance on several other cognitive tests.