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Introduction:

Acute psychotic disorders include a heterogeneous group of disorders characterized by the acute onset of psychotic symptoms. Medico legal acts can be observed during these episodes.

Objective:

To study different evolutionary terms of patients hospitalized in department of forensic psychiatry at Hospital Razi, Tunisia following a withdrawal of case by reason of insanity according to section 38 of the Penal Code and having been diagnosed as an acute psychotic d

Methodology:

A retrospective descriptive study was carried out on files of patients hospitalized in department of forensic psychiatry at Hospital Razi during the period of January 1991 to December 2011 and whose final diagnosis according to DSM VI was a brief psychotic disorder or schizophreniform disorder.

Results:

Our sample consisted of 30 patients. The average age was 28.6 years. Criminal acts were varied: they were dominated by homicide in 5 cases, attempted homicide in 5 cases, 4 cases in theft. On admission, the diagnosis of brief psychotic disorder was selected in 12 patients, whereas the diagnosis of schizophreniform disorder was labeled in 18 cases. Two cases of complete remission were objectified. The outcome was chronic in 17 case: it was paranoid schizophrenia in 5 patients, disorganized schizophrenia in 4 patients, schizoaffective disorder in 4 patients and a disorganized schizophrenia in 2 patients. 6 patients developed bipolar disorder later.

Conclusion:

Acute psychotic episodes constitute a risk period of acting out. Screening for chronic psychiatric disorders occurs by the early identification of patients at risk from the prodromal phase.