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Alteration of body image perception as a side event of antipsychotic treatment in schizophrenic patients

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Background: Patients with schizophrenia that are treated with first generation, but also with several second generation antipsychotics, frequently describe negative changes in self-perception and daily activities due to weight gain. A systematic analysis of the weight gain influence over the body image is necessary because it could offer a perspective over the patient's discomfort, improving his/her chances to therapeutic compliance and a better life quality. Psychotherapy, change of antipsychotics, nutritional counselling, occupational therapy or physical exercises scheduling could be solutions to these cases.

Methods: A group of 34 patients, 18 female and 16 male, diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia (DSM IV TR), mean age 45.3, treated with antipsychotic agents for at least 2 years (haloperidol 15 cases, olanzapine 10 cases, amisulpride 5 cases, risperidone 4 cases) were evaluated in order to configure a body image profile, using self-reports, investigator-based reports and Draw-a-Person-Test (DAP). Patients included in this evaluation presented a mean weight gain of 10%, reported to their premorbid value.

Results: The body image was negative in 82.3% with marked dysfunctional beliefs about self in 64.7%, while the rest of 17.6% had mild to moderate levels of self-blame or hopelessness automatic thoughts associated to weight gain. Only 17.7% patients had a neutral or positive body image, also their mean weight gain was equally to the negative body image group.

Conclusion: Negative body image is usually associated to weight gain as a side event to antipsychotic drugs, therefore is important to ventilate the patient's dysphoric feelings and to choose the optimal therapy.

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Expression of NR1 subunit of NMDA receptor in schizophrenic hippocampus

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Recent data have suggested an involvement of the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor (NMDA-R) signalling complex in schizophrenia pathophysiology. Ubiquitously expressed NR1 subunit, existing in 8 spliced variants, is required for the formation of functional NMDA-Rs. Regional, gender and age-dependent differences in the expression of mRNA and protein of NR1 subunit have been observed. As the expression of C-terminal NR1 isoforms is associated with different pathways for synaptic NMDA-R trafficking and targeting, we have measured levels of mRNA (quantitative RT-PCR) and protein of NR1 and splice isoform NR1C2 (western blot) in post-mortem left and right hippocampi of elderly patients with schizophrenia and non-psychiatric controls. In contrast to previous findings, we did not detect significant differences in the mRNA levels for panNR1 subunit between schizophrenia and control group. However, we found

significant changes in the absolute values of the transcripts associated with schizophrenia, but independent on sex. The expression of panNR1 and NR1C2 proteins exhibited sex difference. Higher protein levels were found in the left hippocampi of women (both schizophrenia and controls) whereas in men the levels were higher in the right hippocampus. Also the interactions of laterality and gender were statistically significant. Further comparison revealed significant sex-dependent laterality comparing schizophrenia and control groups. The significance disappeared in women subgroups. The results suggest that hippocampal differences in the expression of mRNA and protein for pan-form and NR1C2 variant of the NMDA-R1 subunit exhibit significant sex-dependence having in mind that the data are limited in the number of patients/controls.

Supported by IGAMZCR8792

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Influence of personality traits on sexual self-perception and sexual functioning in schizophrenic patients

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Personality traits are an important factor in one's life satisfaction and can therefore influence sexual self-perception and sexual life. Our aim was to determine effects of personality traits on sexual self-perception and sexual dysfunctions in schizophrenic patients.

Research was conducted on 100 schizophrenic patients and 100 healthy individuals. Instruments used: NEO-PI personality questionnaire, Bezinović's questionnaire for sexual self-perception and Arizona sexual experience scale.

Sexual drive and excitement are linked with all personality traits in schizophrenic patients. That means that stronger sexual drive and easier sexual arousal are connected with higher extraversion, pleasantness, consciousness and openness, as well as with lower neuroticism. Among healthy individuals, personality traits don't predict sexual dysfunctions. In schizophrenic patients, personality traits significantly influence all aspects of sexual self-perception except sexual adventurism. However, higher openness is the basis upon which sexual adventurism can be predicted. Pronounced sexual self-scheme is predicted by higher openness and consciousness. Higher openness also predicts higher consciousness of own sexuality. Higher neuroticism is a predictor of negative emotionality and sexual incompetence, and higher extraversion is a predictor of negative emotionality. In healthy individuals, personality traits are predictors of aspects of sexual self-perception. Higher openness and lower consciousness are predictors of more pronounced sexual self-scheme, higher perception of own sexuality and sexual adventurism. Higher openness and lower neuroticism are predictors of higher negative emotionality and sexual incompetence.

We can conclude that personality traits affect aspects of sexual self-perception and sexual dysfunctions in schizophrenic patients and healthy individuals, but their influence differs in certain dimensions.

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QOL of paranoid schizophrenic patients

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