

Poster presentation

The effects of a psychosocial rehabilitation program on the cognitive functioning of chronic schizophrenic patients

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from International Society on Brain and Behaviour: 1st International Congress on Brain and Behaviour
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Thessaloniki, Greece, 20–23 November, 2003

Published: 23 December 2003

Received: 1 November 2003

Annals of General Hospital Psychiatry 2003, **2**(Suppl 1):S84

This article is available from: <http://www.general-hospital-psychiatry.com/content/2/S1/S84>

Background

Schizophrenic disorder is known to be accompanied by cognitive deficits such as impairments of attention, concentration, working memory, and executive function. It is under investigation whether these deficits correlate with indices of psychopathology. The present study aims to investigate the effects of the participation in a vocational psychosocial rehabilitation program on the cognitive functioning of chronic schizophrenic patients and how these effects are determined by their age at illness onset. It also aims to examine whether cognitive functioning correlates with psychiatric symptomatology.

Material and Methods

141 chronic schizophrenic patients (mean duration of illness 8.7 years) attended for 18 months an integrated program of vocational psychosocial rehabilitation designed specially for schizophrenics, which comprised training workshops, and individual and group psychotherapeutic and psychoeducational interventions. During that time patient psychopathology was assessed routinely by the B.P.R.S. and their general functioning by the Occupational Abilities and Performance Scale (O.A.P.S.) For the needs of the present study the following 7 items of the O.A.P.S. relevant to cognitive abilities were examined: 1) "Has the ability to follow instructions", 2) "Pays attention to details", 3) "Can work quickly if necessary", 4) "Can learn new activities", 5) "Remembers instructions", 6) "Concentrates while working", 7) "Has the capacity to perceive and form an idea of the outside world".

Results

Initial results show a significant difference between the measurement at the beginning of the program and the measurement at its completion for all 7 items of the O.A.P.S. The correlation between the scores on the above mentioned items at the completion of the program and the scores on the items of B.P.R.S. assessing negative symptoms at the beginning of the program is to be investigated.

Discussion

Participation in a vocational psychosocial rehabilitation program results in improvement in the cognitive abilities of chronic schizophrenic patients.