

P-135 - EMOTIONAL TRAINING (ET): A GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY TO IMPROVE AWARENESS AND MODULATION OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

F.Mancuso¹, R.M.De Santo¹, G.Piegari¹, A.Palma², M.Chieffi¹, A.Mucci¹, S.Galderisi¹, M.Maj¹

¹Department of Psychiatry, University of Naples SUN, Naples, ²Department of Neurology and Psychiatry, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

Introduction: Several studies have highlighted a poor emotional processing in patients with Panic Disorder (PD). Difficulty to identify and manage emotional experience might contribute to the enduring vulnerability to panic attacks.

Objectives: We describe our implementation of a group psychotherapy program, the Emotional Training (ET), aimed at relapse prevention in patients with PD.

Methods: The ET group incorporates some elements of the so-called "emotion-focused therapies" in a cognitive-behavioral framework. In particular, it introduces elements of skills training to increase awareness of emotional states (including psychophysical reactions), their acceptance and adaptive modulation. The present study was designed to assess the feasibility and efficacy of ET group in healthy subjects.

Results: Nine participants completed this pilot study, which lasted 6 months, with weekly 2.5 hour sessions. General cognitive abilities, selective attention, cognitive flexibility, management of emotions, emotional expressivity, empathy, inhibition of interference from emotional stimuli (emotional Stroop test) and Theory of Mind were assessed before and at the end of the study. Significant differences at 6 months were found for the emotional Stroop test and the Emphaty Quotient, compared to baseline.

Conclusions: These results suggest that ET intervention increases the ability to perceive the emotional states in social contexts and to inhibit the interference from emotional stimuli. This pilot study provided encouraging results; a further step will be to verify, in patients with PD, the effectiveness of ET and its usefulness in relapse prevention.