

Article: 0142

Topic: W04 - Workshop 05: Negative symptoms, cognitive impairment and social cognition in schizophrenia

Apathy in Psychotic Disorders: Relationship to Neurocognition

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Negative symptoms and neurocognitive function are from mild to moderately correlated, and both are correlated to poor functioning. In order to understand more of the underlying nature of these relationships and come up with better treatments the study of the different negative sub-symptoms, their relationship to different cognitive tests and how they together influence functioning can be of value. Apathy or reduced motivation/avolition is one of the negative sub-symptoms that have been given increased attention during the last years. Results from two studies will be presented, both with first episode patients from the ongoing TOP/NORMENT study in Oslo, Norway. The first study explored the correlation between apathy and different neurocognitive domains. The second study explored the pattern of influence from neurocognition and apathy together with other variables upon psychosocial functioning at start of treatment and after one year. In study one it was found that apathy only had significant correlation to tests of executive function and no other cognitive tests. In study two the pattern of influence was the same at start- and after one year with apathy explaining the greatest variance; in addition verbal memory and gender had significant influence. The first study confirms that apathy is only linked to tests of executive function, a result also found in other brain disorders. The second study shows independent contribution from both apathy and specific cognitive areas to poor functioning. These findings can be used in tailoring more specific treatments, understanding more of the underlying mechanisms and shows the importance of focusing on the negative sub-symptoms and the different cognitive tests.