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SPECIFICITY OF COGNITIVE DEFICITS IN PSYCHOSIS; INITIAL PRESENTATION AND COURSE OF ALTERATIONS AMONG DIFFERENT DIAGNOSES

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Objective: To describe possible differences in the initial cognitive profile between schizophrenia and non-schizophrenia first episode psychosis patients.

Method: We assessed attention, working memory, and executive functioning in 57 first episode psychosis patients at baseline and at a one-year follow-up.

Results: No significant differences were detected in the cognitive profile among schizophrenia (n=20) and non-schizophrenia (n=37) patients at baseline or at the one-year follow-up. For the overall group, significant reductions in the percentage of omission and commission errors for the sustained attention task (p< 0.001 and p=0.001 respectively), in the total time to complete the Stroop-I task (p< 0.001), in the percentage of omission errors for the working memory task (p=0.001), and in the percentage of perseverative errors for the WCST (p< 0.001) were detected, as well as a significant increase in the number of categories completed in the WCST (p< 0.001). The other cognitive variables analyzed remained stable (4 of the 10 variables tested). The pattern of change was similar for schizophrenia and non-schizophrenia patients in the areas of attention and working memory. For executive functioning, the non-schizophrenia group showed a more beneficial pattern of change.

Conclusions: Our results indicate a lack of specificity of cognitive alterations related to the degree of affectation, at least during the first year after instauration of treatment. The course of cognitive deficits in first episode psychosis showed significant improvements over this period, being the patter of change in executive functioning slightly more beneficial for patients with a non-schizophrenia psychosis.