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DIAGNOSTIC STABILITY AND CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN FIRST-EPISODE PSYCHOSIS

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Introduction: Diagnostic stability in first-episode psychosis shows a wide variability between studies. Amini and cols reported a 50% rate of patients schizophreniform disorder shifting to schizophrenia during the first 12 months period. We report the preliminary follow-up results of our recently ongoing first- episode psychosis unit.

Methods: Forty-six patients admitted for a first-episode psychosis to our Inpatient Psychiatric Unit from January 2006 to January 2008 were recruited. Clinical and socio-demographic characteristics were registered during admission period and during the follow-up period.

Results: At admission 52% of the first-episode subjects had a diagnosis of psychosis NOS and 32% a schizophreniform disorder diagnosis. After discharge, most of the patients (72%) had a diagnosis of schizophreniform disorder, 16% psychosis NOS and 8% brief psychotic disorder. Six months later, half of the followed-up patients had a schizophreniform disorder diagnosis, and 23% had a diagnosis of schizophrenia. 30% of the patients were drop-outs, mainly referred to other out-patient services. Patients shifting to schizophrenia were younger, predominantly male (75% vs 50% in non-schizophrenia shift), had a lower proportion of university studies and presented a longer hospitalization period at admission. No differences in familial history of psychosis and cannabis use were found. After one-year follow-up period, 50% preserved a schizophreniform disorder diagnosis and 30% were diagnosed as schizophrenia.

Conclusions: Schizophrenia spectrum disorders have a high stability in first-episode psychosis during first year follow-up. As in previous studies, male gender is one of the factors that best predicts the shift to schizophrenia.