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COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTIONS IN CHRONIC SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CLINICAL AND FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY

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Aims: The aims of the current study are:

- To examine the clinical symptoms and functional capacity of the patients.
- To evaluate the cognitive dysfunctions and to see how they develop in 6 month.
- To examine the relationship between clinical and functional capacity and the cognitive dysfunctions of the chronic schizophrenia patients.

Method: 24 people with chronic schizophrenia were followed up 6 month along with a control group of 50 individuals free from schizophrenia. Patients were diagnosed using DSM-IV criteria, assessed with the PANSS, GAF, to evaluate psychiatric symptoms, respectively functionality. Rey Memory Test, Trail Making, Spatial Recognition Memory (SRM), Spatial Working Memory (SWM), Paired Associated Learning (PAL), Spatial Span (SSP) and Stroking of Cambridge (SOC) from the CANTAB were applied to all patients at the start point of the study and after 6 month, in order to evaluate the cognitive functions.

Results: The overall performance of chronic schizophrenia patients was significantly lower compared to healthy individuals on all cognitive tasks. The cognitive dysfunction is independent of age and intellectual level, but does correlate with global functioning and remain stable. CANTAB is a useful tool to detect and estimate the cognitive impairments.

Conclusions: The current study reveals that cognitive impairments are a central feature of schizophrenia and a major cause of poor functioning of the patients. The chronic schizophrenia patients perform worse on all investigated cognitive domains (memory, attention and executive function). The reviewed studies show different opinions about the development of these impairments. Further longitudinal studies are required in order to settle if they remain stable or progress in time.