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DURATION OF UNTREATED PSYCHOSIS AND ITS CORRELATES IN FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS: RESULTS OF THE PROSPECTIVE 5-YEAR FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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Introduction: Duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) is a potentially changeable prognostic factor which can also indicate neurodegenerative process in schizophrenia.

Objective: To examine the association of DUP with various characteristics of the course of schizophrenia in first episode patients during 5-year follow-up.

Methods: One-hundred-fourteen patients with first psychotic episodes who have been treated in naturalistic setting within Early Intervention Centre (Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry) were included. Clinical, social and neuropsychological parameters were assessed using standardized instruments.

Results: The mean duration of untreated psychotic symptoms before admission was 298.66 ± 447.35 days. According to the analysis DUP was found to be significantly associated with the mode of onset ($r=0.51$, $p \leq 0.001$) level of remission ($r=0.21-0.30$, $p \leq 0.05$), severity of positive symptoms and negative symptoms in remission mostly at 2nd, 3^d and 4th years of observation, poorer level of social adjustment at the 5th year ($r=0.19$, $p \leq 0.05$). The effect of DUP remained significant after controlling for age, gender and diagnostic variables.

Moreover, DUP correlated with the parameters of verbal memory, visual memory and spatial functions during the follow-up ($r=0.29-0.36$, $p \leq 0.05$, $r=0.28-0.30$, $p \leq 0.05$, respectively). No correlations have been found between DUP and the age of onset, number of relapses and their duration during 5-year follow-up as well as with other neurocognitive parameters (executive functioning, gnosis, praxis, attention).

Conclusions: The results of the study underline the prognostic value of DUP for predicting clinical and functional outcomes. Association between DUP and poor memory domains supports the notion of neurotoxicity of DUP grasping specific brain regions in schizophrenia.