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SEXUAL FUNCTION IN UNTREATED THEN TREATED SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS: A PROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Introduction: High prevalence of impaired sexual function in patients with schizophrenia has been reported by several studies. Various factors were incriminated including the disease itself, the low level of social competence and treatmentside effects.

Objective: To compare sexual function in drug free schizophrenic patients and six months after initializing antipsychotic treatment.

Methods: A consecutive sample of 109 patients meeting DSM-IV criteria of schizophrenia was constituted in psychiatry department of Farhat Hached hospital (Sousse, Tunisia), during a twenty four months period. They were drug naïve or drug free for at least three months. Assessment was performed at two time points:

T0: During an acute phase of the disease as defined by a BPRS global score  $\geq 40$  T1: six months after antipsychotic treatment.

Assessment of sexual function used the Arizona Sexual Experience Scale (ASEX)

Results: Sexual function was impaired under antipsychotic treatment. In fact, we noticed lower global score of asex ( $p = 0.03$ ) and lower subscores of drive ( $p = 0.015$ ), arousal ( $p = 0.006$ ), erection or vaginal lubrication ( $p = 0.010$ ), orgasm ( $p = 0.001$ ) and satisfaction ( $p = 0.005$ ).

Conclusion: Sexual function was impaired in patients under antipsychotic drugs, according to global score and to different sexual dimensions subscores. This results seem to, prospectively, confirm the implication of treatment in sexual dysfunction occurrence among schizophrenic patients.