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TRAINING OF ATTENTIVENESS IN YOUNG SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE DRUG ABUSE

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Statement of the problem: Recent studies have conclusively proven the effectiveness of cognitive training in the context of psychiatric rehabilitation. Examinations on young schizophrenic multiple drug users are yet to be done, although it could be shown that most of these patients are likely to relapse, abandon therapy and show untreated social adaptation disorders if existing cognitive functional deficits are not treated appropriately.

Method: Pre-post examinations were done on 80 schizophrenic drug users (mean age 26±4 years) to assess various attentiveness functions (i.e. alertness, crossmodal integration, divided attentiveness, flexibility, working memory, go nogo, visual scanning) before and after computerised attentiveness training (CURE therapy system, Siemens (NCSys)). Patient results were compared to those of a control group matched for age, education, illness characteristics and current medication which did not undergo cognitive training. Cognitive training lasted 10 weeks.

Results: Computerised attentiveness training led to significant (>30%) improvement in everyday attentiveness functions (tonic and phasic alertness, divided attentiveness), although some patient subgroups are different in their course of therapy.

Discussion: Training specific attentiveness functions helps improve rehabilitation of young schizophrenic patients with multiple drug abuse. Subgroup effects may also be of clinical relevance.