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ALEXITHYMIA AND SUICIDE RISK AMONG PATIENTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Objectives: The aim of the present study was to evaluate the prevalence of alexithymia and its relationships with psychopathological features and suicide risk in a sample of adult patients with a DSM-IV diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia.

Method: A mixed male-female sample of 60 subjects (30 males and 30 females) was evaluated with the following rating scales: Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms (SANS), Scale for the Assessment of Positive Symptoms (SAPS), Calgary Depression Scale for Schizophrenia (CDSS), Scale for Suicidal Ideation (SSI), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). **RESULTS.** 22 subjects (36.7%) were categorized as alexithymic (TAS-20 scores ≥ 61). Alexithymics showed more severe negative and depressive symptoms and increased suicide risk than nonalexithymics.

However, the results of a linear regression with SSI score as dependent variable showed that Difficulty in Identifying and Describing Feelings dimensions of TAS-20 and higher CDSS scores were significantly associated with higher scores on the Scale for Suicide Ideation.

Conclusions: The presence of alexithymia in schizophrenia may be related to higher risk of suicide ideation and more severe depressive symptoms, independently by the severity of positive and negative symptoms. However, results are preliminary and limitations must be considered.