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## SENSE OF FAMILIARITY AND FACE EMOTION RECOGNITION IN SCHIZOPHRENIA

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**Introduction:** Patients with schizophrenia show a deficit in emotion recognition through facial expression. Familiarity means the implicit memory of past affective experiences and it involves fast cognitive processes and it is triggered by certain signals.

**Objectives:** To assess the emotion recognition in familiar and unfamiliar faces in a sample of schizophrenic patients and healthy controls.

**Methods:** 18 outpatients diagnosed with schizophrenia (DSM-IVTR) and 18 healthy volunteers were assessed with the Ekman Test of emotion recognition in unfamiliar faces. In addition each subject was accompanied by 4 familiar people (parents, siblings or friends), which was photographed by expressing the 6 Ekman's basic emotions.

**Results:** Schizophrenic patients recognize worse emotions in their relatives than in neutral faces, a greater extent than controls (Mann-Whitney  $U = 81$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The patient group showed a mean score on the Ekman test (neutral faces) lower than control group (16 (SD 2.38) versus 17.82 (2.13;  $U p = 0.03$ ). Regarding familiar faces, the group patients showed a worse performance than the control group (13.22 (3.8) versus 17.18 (2.82);  $U p = 0.00$ ). In both tests, the highest number of errors was with emotions of anger and fear. The patients group showed a lower level of familiarity and emotional valence to their families ( $U = 33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions:** The sense of familiarity may be a factor involved in face emotion recognition and it may be disturbed in schizophrenia.