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SOCIAL COGNITION AND GENERAL FUNCTIONING IN BIPOLAR DISORDER

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Introduction: Bipolar patients show a significant degree of psychosocial disfunction even in euthymia. Recent studies have reported deficits in Theory of Mind and emotion recognition in BD. Our hypothesis is that social cognition deficit could be associated with a poor general functioning and psychosocial disadvantage in BD.

Methods: A sample of 27 euthymic bipolar patients were recluted. Based on Global Assessment of Functioning, they were divided into two groups: good or low general functioning. Euthymia was defined as YMRS < 6 and HDRS < 8, during a 3-month period. Patients with high (n 18) and low (n 9) functioning were compared on several clinical variables and on social / general cognitive measures. Both verbal and non verbal Theory of Mind capacities were assesed (*faux pas* test and face emotion recognition test). Finally, sustained attention and executive functions were evaluated (Asarnow Test and WSCT).

Results: High- and low-functioning groups did not differ with respect to demographic and clinical variables (age, sex, age at onset, years of evolution of illness, history of prior psychotic symptoms; p = n.s.). However, low-functioning group showed poorer performance than high-functioning group both in *faux pas* test (U Mann Whitney; p=0.035) and face emotion recognition (U; p = 0.021). In addition, low-functioning group also showed a significant impairment in general cognitive funtions such as sustained attention (U, p = 0.007) and executive funtions (U, p = 0.046).

Conclusion: Social cognition deficit is associated with a poorer general functioning and psychosocial disadvantage.