

Depressive symptoms in schizophrenia: a study in hospitalized patients

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The occurrence of depressive symptoms in schizophrenic patients hospitalized for an acute psychotic episode has been repeatedly reported in the literature, but the estimates of the prevalence of these symptoms have been very inconsistent, with values ranging from 19–45% (Leff, 1988). This is clearly related to the variability of the patient samples assessed and of the depressive symptoms considered.

It is commonly held that depressive symptoms often follow the course of psychotic ones, remitting with the resolution of the acute psychotic episodes (Green, 1990). It is recognized, however, that in a minority of patients, depression may persist after resolution of the psychotic episode, which accounts for part of the cases of 'post-psychotic' depression. The proportion of these last cases is variously estimated from 9–22%.

We carried out a study of 95 patients (53 males and 42 females, age range 16–54 years, mean \pm SD 27.9 \pm 7.8), consecutively admitted to the inpatient ward of the Department of Psychiatry of the First Medical School of Naples University from January 1, 1986 and onwards.

All these patients were assessed using the CPRS (Asberg *et al*, 1978) on admission and on discharge (remission of the psychotic episode) from the ward. The duration of the hospital stay of these subjects ranged from 1–103 days (mean \pm SD 24.7 \pm 20.5). All of them were treated with neuroleptics (from 60–800 mg/eq of chlorpromazine/day). No patient was treated with antidepressants.

For the purpose of the study, we used a subscale of CPRS including the items 'depressed mood',

'depressive thoughts', 'suicidal ideas' and 'slowness of movements'.

The percentage of patients presenting at least two of the above symptoms on admission was 38.9%, which is a frequency very close to that reported by Siris *et al* (1987) and Leff *et al* (1988). Of these patients, 46.8% showed on discharge a complete remission of depressive symptoms, whereas 37.5% presented a partial remission and 13.5% no remission.

These figures support the view that depressive symptoms are frequently part of the clinical picture of schizophrenia, and that they usually follow the course of psychotic ones.

References

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