P35.12
Respiratory irregularity in respiratory subtype panic
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Objectives: The role of respiratory function in Panic Disorder (PD) is controversial and the nature of respiratory abnormalities remains unclear. We investigated the relationship between respiratory physiology and hyperreactivity to CO2 in PD patients.

Method: Baseline breathing patterns of 14 PD patients with prominent respiratory symptoms during the 35% CO2 challenge (respiratory subtype) and 10 PD patients without respiratory symptoms (non-respiratory subtype) were compared. The respiratory physiology assessment was carried out using a "breath by breath" Quarkb2 stationary testing system. The irregularity of the breathing patterns was measured by the Approximate Entropy Index (ApEn).

Results: Respiratory subtype group reported a greater irregular baseline pattern of tidal volume (TV) and inspiratory drive (TV/Ti) than non-respiratory subtype group. The former also reported higher global anxiety, global symptomatological reactivity and baseline pattern of tidal volume (TV) and inspiratory drive (TV/Ti) during spontaneous panic attacks than the latter.

Conclusions: Symptomatological hyperreactivity to hypercapnia is related to an abnormal baseline respiratory function. It supports the idea of an abnormal regulation of the respiratory function as a key mechanism in Panic Disorder.

P35.13
Effects of venlafaxine on CO2 hyperreactivity in panic disorder
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Objective: evaluate the effects of one week treatment with venlafaxine on CO2 hyperreactivity in patients with PD

Method: 14 outpatients with PD were enrolled. All subjects underwent 35% CO2 challenge before starting treatment and after one week of treatment with venlafaxine (75 mg/day). The reactivity to CO2 was assessed by Visual Analogue Scale for Anxiety (VAS-A). The severity of symptomatology was assessed by Panic Associated Symptoms Scale (PASS), Fear Questionnaire (FQ) and Hamilton Anxiety Scale (HAM-A) on day 0 and 7.

Results: a significant decrease of reactivity to CO2 after 7 days of treatment with venlafaxine was found. No significant differences were found in the scores of psychometric scales after one week of treatment and no significant correlation between changes in the scores of psychometric scales and the measures of anxious reactivity to CO2.

Conclusions: the results showed a significant reduction of reactivity to CO2 in patients with PD suggesting that venlafaxine has anti-panic properties.

P35.14
The language of dyspnea in panic disorder
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Objectives: Dyspnea is one of the main symptoms of panic attacks and the "false suffocation alarm theory" proposed by Donald Klein suggested a central role of respiration in panic disorder.

P35.15
Treatment of panic disorder via the Internet: two randomized trials
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Results from two randomized trials are presented. The first controlled study evaluated an Internet-delivered self-help program plus minimal therapist contact via email for people suffering from panic disorder. Out of the 500 individuals screened using the self-administered diagnostic instrument Composite International Diagnostic Interview in shortened form (World Health Organization, 1999) 41 fulfilled the inclusion criteria. These participants were randomized to either treatment via the Internet or to a waiting-list control. The main components of the treatment were psychoeducation, breathing retraining, cognitive restructuring, interoceptive exposure, in vivo exposure, and relapse prevention. From pre- to posttest self-help participants improved significantly more on almost all dimensions. The results from this experiment generally provide evidence for the continued use and development of self-help programs for panic disorder distributed via the Internet. Preliminary results from the second trial will also be presented.

P35.16
Comorbidity in panic disorders
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There have been studied 50 patients with a diagnosis of panic disorder selected according to the DSM-IV criteria. The comorbidity of panic disorders with other psychiatric disorders has been assessed in terms of frequency and time relation. This aspect has been demonstrated studied starting with the onset of panic disorder, onset that generally precedes the index assessment.

Among more frequent comorbid states have been registered: anticipatory anxiety (76% of cases), hypochondriac preoccupations (72%), agoraphobia (62%), depression (42%), alcohol abuse (36%).

The time relation between panic disorders and comorbid states has been analyzed considering the onset of the panic disorder. Anticipatory anxiety, agoraphobia, hypochondriac preoccupation and alcohol abuse have started predominantly in the first 6 months since the onset of panic disorder, and depressive episodes occurred after more than a year from onset. The high rates of comorbidity