

P01-174

QUANTIFYING CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ANXIETY VARIABILITY IN ADOLESCENCE:  
“MISSING PARTS” OF THE PHENOTYPE DEFINITION

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Introduction: Although several risk factors for anxiety-related phenotypes have been identified, few studies have quantified the weight of each one of these factors.

Objective/aim: The aim of this study is to quantify contributions for anxiety variance in adolescents.

Methods: Ninety-seven adolescents from a community cross-sectional study and their parents were assessed with a structured DSM-IV diagnostic interview, several psychiatric and environmental rating scales and with a nutritional evaluation. The whole evaluation protocol generates 31 constructs previously associated with anxiety-related phenotypes in the literature. These constructs were organized in a hierarchical block analysis as follows:

- (1) socio-demographic and early life environment;
- (2) family environment and maternal psychiatric symptomatology and temperament;
- (3) stressful life-events and maltreatment;
- (4) physical health and nutrition. The Screen for Children and Adolescent Related Anxiety Disorders (SCARED) was used as outcome.

Results: The results of our hierarchical model accounts for only 24% of the total SCARED score. Hierarchically, block one and two did not explain significantly the SCARED variability ( $r^2=0.078$ ;  $p=0.011$  and  $r^2=0.106$ ;  $p=0.064/p_{\text{incremental}}=0.090$ ). After the inclusion of block 3, the hierarchical model achieved statistical significance ( $r^2=0.231$ ;  $p=0.001/p_{\text{incremental}}=0.001$ ), with little additional explanation after the inclusion of block 4 ( $r^2=0.243$ ;  $p=0.001 / p_{\text{incremental}}=0.242$ ).

Conclusion: Even after an extensive exploratory analysis we were able to explain only about one fourth of anxiety symptoms variability in adolescents. Our findings support the notion that we still have a distant comprehension of the factors that lead to anxiety in adolescents and that the major determinants of anxiety disorders in adolescence are still missing.