FC92

Soluble Fas ligand (sFasL) as a predictor of reduction of general psychopathology in schizophrenia after antipsychotic treatment

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Introduction Dysregulation of the apoptotic process is associated with the etiopathogenesis of schizophrenia, which is observed at the brain and peripheral blood levels. A significant negative correlation between the duration of the disease and serum sFasL concentration was demonstrated by other authors. It was shown that an increased rate of apoptosis is more pronounced in neuroleptic-free patients with the first-episode of schizophrenia than in patients with chronic disease.
Aim Search for a predictor of good response to antipsychotic treatment based on the analysis of the sFasL plasma level and its relationship with clinical symptoms.
Methods Fifty-three patients with chronic schizophrenia and 46 healthy individuals were enrolled in the study. The concentration of sFasL was measured by ELISA. Clinical assessments (PANSS, SANS, SAPS) and blood analyses were conducted three times: during the active phase of disease (at admission), after 4 weeks of pharmacotherapy, and after reaching remission.
Results In the schizophrenia group, non-altered levels of sFasL ($P = 0.1$; U Mann-Whitney test), compared to the control, were detected at admission. The initial level of sFasL correlated negatively ($r = -0.33$; $P = 0.04$; Spearman's rank) with blood leukocyte count. Despite clinical improvement, no significant changes in the level of sFasL were observed. However, the sFasL level correlated negatively with the PANSS general psychopathology reduction after 4 weeks of pharmacotherapy ($r = -0.7$; $P = 0.04$) and after remission ($r = -0.39$; $P = 0.026$).
Conclusions The results indicate a possible role of sFasL in apoptosis of blood leukocytes and suggest that the reduction of sFasL level can predict level of PANSS general psychopathology after antipsychotic treatment in schizophrenia.
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FC93

Basic symptoms as subjective cognitive deficit in schizophrenia: Cognitive, clinical and functional associations

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Introduction Basic symptoms are subjective complaints that present at the early states in psychotic disorders and persist in the long-term. They can be studied using hetero applied clinical instruments or self-administered questionnaires. Basic symptoms can be useful as screening tools in at risk populations.
Aims To determine if basic symptoms (subjective cognitive deficits) are associated with the objectively measured cognitive deficit after controlling for functioning and symptomatology.
Methods One observational, transversal, psychopathological and neuropsychological study was performed on a schizophrenia outpatients sample ($n = 78$). Correlations were measured by using Spearman's Rho coefficient. Basic symptoms were registered by using the Frankfurt Complaints Questionnaire (FCQ-3); cognitive status was assessed by Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS); clinical status was assessed by PANSS and Clinical Global Impression (CGI); functional status was measured with Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF).
Results All the dimensions were related to subjective complaints: cognitive functioning ($r = -.38$; $P < .001$); positive symptoms ($r = .54$; $P < .001$); negative symptoms ($r = .26$; $P < .02$); general symptoms ($r = .41$; $P < .001$); CGI ($r = .57$; $P < .001$); GAF ($r = -.45$; $P < .001$). The association between subjective and objective cognitive deficit remains significative after controlling for the clinical and functional variables, except when controlling for CGI.
Conclusions The evaluation of basic symptoms with FCQ-3 is related with an objective cognitive deficit and could be useful as a screening tool.
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FC94

Adjunctive memantine in clozapine-treated refractory schizophrenia: A one-year extension study

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Introduction In a recent 26-week placebo-controlled, crossover trial ($n = 52$) we found significant positive effects on verbal and visual memory, and negative symptoms in clozapine-treated patients with refractory schizophrenia.
Objectives In this 1-year extension study, we report the long-term effects and tolerability of memantine add-on therapy to clozapine.
Aims To evaluate the persistence of improvements in cognitive functioning and symptoms of memantine add-on therapy to clozapine in schizophrenia.
Methods Completers of the first trial who experienced a beneficial effect of memantine after 12 weeks continued memantine for one year. Primary endpoints were change from baseline to 26 weeks treatment and 26 weeks to 52 weeks treatment on memory and executive function using the Cambridge Neuropsychological Test Automated Battery (CANTAB), Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS), and Clinical Global Impression Severity Scale (CGI-S). Secondary endpoints were change on the Health of the Nation