SES05.3

Gender, marital status and quality of life in schizophrenia

R.K.R. Salokangas[1]*, T. Honkonen[2], E. Stengård[3], A.-M. Koivisto[4]. [1]*Turku University Central Hospital, Department of Psychiatry;* [2]*Section of Neuroscience, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health;* [3]*Department of Psychology, University of Tampere;* [4]*Tampere School of Public Health, Finland*

Objectives: The association of gender and marital status with Quality of Life (QoL) was studied in long-term schizophrenia patients.

Methods: The study sample consists of 3256 schizophrenia patients. Data were collected from case records and the patients were interviewed three years after the index discharge.

Results: Female patients were more often married and lived alone or with their spouse more often than men. Women and married men had migrated more often than single men, who had often remained living in a remote rural area. The QoL of single men was poorer than others in almost all the areas in which it was measured.

Conclusions: Single male patients with schizophrenia seem to have dropped out of the development of society. Single women migrate more consistently into urban areas, which may be favourable for their QoL. Married patients with schizophrenia, possibly partly helped by their spouse, can best follow changes in the society.

SES05.4

Gender differences in anxiety disorders

H.-U. Wittchen. *Germany*

No abstract was available at the time of printing.

SES05.5

Women and dementia

J. Kornhuber[1]*, J. Wiltfang[2]. [1]*Department of Psychiatry, University of Erlangen;* [2]*Department of Psychiatry, University of Göttingen, Germany*

There are a number of epidemiological and clinical differences between man and women regarding dementia: (1) The prevalence of DAT is higher in women. However, it is not entirely clear whether this is an age or a gender effect. (2) The genetic risk factor ApoE4 appears to be more relevant in women. (3) In the clinical appearance there are no marked gender-specific differences, but there is an greater impairment of speech in women and more aggressive behavior in men.

A meta-analysis of prospective observational studies and case control studies shows that the risk of DAT among postmenopausal women taking ERT was reduced 30 % compared to women never exposed to estrogens. This may also be explained by confounding factors in case control studies, because women on ERT may be better educated, have higher socioeconomic status, have better access to medical care and may be more concerned about their health.

The results of prospective randomized clinical trials shows that estrogens have no beneficial effect in DAT patients. The effects of estrogens may depend on the point at which intervention occurs: Estrogens may be effective in delaying the onset of DAT and have some cognitive benefits in women who are free of dementia. Furthermore, estrogens may result in enhanced mood and secondarily enhanced memory effects.

S17. Genetic basis for affective disorders

Chairs: M. Schalling (S), J.R. Kelsoe (USA)

S17.1

Polysomnographic, neuroendocrine and psychometric risk factors for depression

S. Modell*, M. Ising, C. Lauer, F. Holsboer. *Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, Munich, Germany*

Affective disorders are familial conditions and present a considerable risk factor for an individual carrying a high genetic load. We have investigated 83 healthy subjects who had at least 2 close relatives with an affective disorder. These "high-risk probands" (HRPs) were examined with polysomnography and a neuroendocrine challenge test (DEX/CRH test), since both areas show abnormalities in depression. Moreover psychometric measurements were included. The HRPs exhibited a depression-like sleep-EEG profile and DEX/CRH test results. The psychometric profile revealed elevated scores for "rigidity" and "autonomic lability". In a follow-up study these results showed a high stability over time. In the meantime we were able to identify 20 HRPs who have developed a psychiatric disorder. Premorbidly these HRPs show an increased REM density and elevated scores for "vegatative lability" and "stress coping". This indicates that these polysomnographic and psychometric parameters could serve as vulnerability markers for the onset of a psychiatric disease.

S17.2

Data from the biomed european consortium for affective disorders*

D. Souery*, J. Mendlewicz. *Department of Psychiatry, University Clinics of Brussels, Erasme Hospital, Free University of Brussels, Belgium*

Background: Linkage analyses and association studies are the two common types of strategies used in genetic studies. Linkage analyses aim at detecting a cosegregation of a specific variant (allele) of a genetic marker with a particular disorder in families. Association studies aim at demonstrating a significantly different distribution of gene variants (alleles) in control and affected populations. Evidence supporting the possible role of neurotransmitter changes in the pathogenesis of some psychiatric disorders has led to a candidate gene strategy in association studies.

Objectives and Methods: The European Collaborative Project on Affective Disorders (ECPAD) «Interactions between genetic and psychosocial vulnerability factors», involving 15 european centers apply a multicenter-based methodology to examine the possible role of candidate genes in affective disorders. Special attention is given to statistical analysis, the statistical power of the samples and the interaction with psychosocial variables. More than 3000 subjects have been recruited for case-control association studies with candidate genes. This material provides a powerful tool in the search for susceptibility genes in affective disorders and also takes into account non-genetic aetiological factors. Phenotypic heterogeneity has been considered and subgroups analyses have been conducted with relevant variables: age at onset, family history and diagnostic stability.

Results: In a sample of 401 BPAD patients and 401 normal controls with genotyped for a tetranucleotide polymorphism of Tyrosine Hydroxylase (TH) gene, no association has been found between BPAD phenotype and TH alleles frequency, genotypes

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