

P-1287 - THE PERCEPTION OF DYNAMIC EVENTS IN SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS: A DISSOCIATION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CAUSALITY

S.Pimenta, N.De Sá Teixeira, V.Raposo, M.Bajouco, V.Martins, L.Oliveira

¹Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico de Coimbra, ²Institute of Cognitive Psychology, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

Humans have been shown to be particularly sensitive to dynamic information processing. When simple animations are shown which, moreover, is compatible with biological and/or social events, perception obeys that biological and/or social interpretation. Likewise, when the animation is compatible with a physical event (mechanical causality), the correspondent causal structure is brought to awareness. The perception of these events is, in sum, direct, irresistible and automatic. Although perception of causality impairments are well documented in clinical populations (e.g. autism), literature is short in studies on this matter in schizophrenia. Both control and schizophrenia groups were shown a set of animations featuring two squares moving in the same direction. Relative distances and movements were systematically manipulated so that a continuous variation between physical, social and independent events was achieved. In each trial, one of those animations was displayed at random and the subjects asked to identify which of three possible causal structures (“physical”, “social” or “independent”) best matched the event seen. Schizophrenics were less prone to provide social causality responses, but more inclined to independent or physical causality perceptions. Moreover, the physical to social causality threshold was shown to be higher for schizophrenic patients. Taken as a whole, these results suggest an apprehension deficit in social events perception in schizophrenic patients.