

**PW01-179 - EFFECT OF CANNABIS MISUSE ON DURATION OF UNTREATED PSYCHOSIS AND PATHWAYS TO CARE OF PATIENTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA**

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**Objectives:** This study aimed to assess:

- a) the socio-demographic characteristics of patients with schizophrenia who were using cannabis at time of first appearing of psychotic symptoms;
- b) the impact of cannabis on the duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) and on pathways to care;
- c) the influence of cannabis on the clinical onset and on the first three years of the disorder.

**Methods:** Twenty-two patients with a recent onset (< 3 years) of schizophrenia were consequently recruited at the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Naples SUN. Socio-demographic characteristics, pathways to care and DUP were investigated by ad-hoc schedules.

**Results:** About 60% of patients were using cannabis at onset of schizophrenia. All of them were male and did not have a job and with a lower education level. "Cannabis users" had a first contact with general practitioners earlier than "non cannabis users", but their DUP was longer, as a consequence of significant delays in access to mental health care. Cannabis users showed higher rates of suicide attempts and relapses in the first three years, suggesting a more severe course of the disorder in the "critical period" of schizophrenia in this population.

**Conclusions:** The results of the study emphasize the need:

- a) to carry out sensitization campaigns among young people in order to reduce the use of cannabis and other illicit drugs;
- b) to promote information on schizophrenia for general practitioners.