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Social Functioning in Schizophrenia: the Role of Emotion Recognition Abilities

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Introduction: One of the current concerns in the research on schizophrenia is the relationship between social functioning and emotion recognition abilities, more specifically of the role that this can have, as a potential pathway for building subsequent psychosocial intervention methods.

Objectives: To establish the precise role that the ability to recognize emotions has on social functioning in subjects with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia.

Aim: To help develop psychotherapeutic intervention programs that will increase social functioning.

Method: This paper analyzed a sample of subjects (N=31) with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia (according to the WHO ICD 10), who were selected based on inclusion/exclusion criteria. The following parameters were assessed: socio-demographic (gender, age of onset, level of education, family and professional status), social functioning (SFS scale) and the ability to identify emotions in the eyes ('Reading the Mind in the Eyes' test).

Results: The ability of recognizing the emotion 'anger' is directly correlated with the ability to communicate and keep interpersonal relations (Spearman R = 0.310, p <0.05), the ability of independence/performance (Spearman R = 0.471, p <0.05), as well as the ability to relax (Spearman R = 0.456, p <0.05) and to engage in social activities (Spearman R = 0.473, p <0.05).

Conclusion: We noted that 'anger' is the only emotion that was correlated with social functioning. Anger must be understood beyond its negative connotation, also as a positive element, in the sense of positioning the individual in the society and of taking action in regard to personal needs.