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INTEGRATED PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY (IPT) WITH YOUNG AND MIDDLE-AGED SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS: ARE THE EFFECTS AFFECTED BY PATIENTS' AGE?

D.R. Mueller, V. Roder, S.J. Schmidt

University of Berne, University Psychiatric Hospital Berne, Bern, Switzerland

Introduction: There is a lack of evidence-based therapy approaches designed for the increasing number of middle-aged and elderly schizophrenia patients. Only very few approaches for this population addressing social skills were published yet.

Objectives: Cognitive deficits are present in most schizophrenia patients independent of age. Only few empirical data exist whether therapeutic interventions can reduce cognitive deficits in middle-aged or elderly schizophrenia patients. An exception represents the Integrated Psychological Therapy (IPT), a group-based cognitive-behavioral therapy approach combining interventions on cognition and social skills.

Aims:

- a) Do middle-aged schizophrenia patients benefit from IPT as much as do younger patients?
- b) Do these two populations benefit equal under control conditions (unspecific group intervention and/or treatment as usual)?
- c) Are age-specific therapy settings demanded?

For that purpose we selected all studies including interventions on cognition out of the data pool of 36 independent evaluation studies on IPT.

Methods: A standard meta-analytic procedure was used.

Results: Middle-aged and younger patients participating in IPT showed equal treatment effects. IPT was superior to both control conditions independent of patients' age. Younger patients reached the level of small effects in both control conditions whereas middle-aged patients showed absolutely no effects. The therapy setting in groups with younger patients differed from that with older patients in duration of therapy and weekly therapy sessions.

Conclusions: Results support efficacy of IPT independently of patients' age. Evidence-based therapy should be implemented in psychiatric rehabilitation with elderly schizophrenia patients considering their specific needs into therapy setting.