

RELEVANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF DEMORALIZATION IN SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS

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Introduction: Depression is difficult to diagnose in schizophrenic patients although it represents a frequent motive for suicide. In clinical practice nonspecific sadness is more often observed than major depressive episodes. Our analysis of these states led us to the concept of demoralization.

Objectives: The objective of our study was to demonstrate the existence of demoralization in psychotic patients as a real entity and to see how it could be correlated with other dimensions.

Methods: A total of 55 ambulatory patients diagnosed with a schizophrenic disorder were included and distributed in 2 groups according to the level of demoralization. The correlation with residual psychotic symptoms (PANSS), depression (CDSS), despair (BHS), and quality of life (SQoL) as well as the sociodemographic characteristics and past history of suicide attempts was assessed.

Results: More than 94 % of our patients were found demoralized, 16,36 % of them severely. The degree of demoralization was correlated with the intensity of positive symptoms ($p = 0.016$), depression ($p < 0.001$), despair ($p = 0.015$), suicidality ($p < 0.01$) as well as poor quality of life ($p = 0.007$) and low self-esteem ($p < 0.000$).

Conclusions: Demoralization appears to be a relevant concept during schizophrenia, bound in schizophrenic and depressive process, and impacting the suicidal risk. It could represent an important stake in the care of schizophrenic patients especially for the prevention of relapse and suicidal risk.