

## ORIGINAL PAPER

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VERBAL FLUENCY IN PATIENTS WITH PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIA, FIRST GRADE RELATIVES AND HEALTHY CONTROLS

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Received 28 Jan 2019, Accepted 03 Apr 2019

<https://doi.org/10.31688/ABMU.2019.54.2.17>

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** Cognitive impairment is a key symptom of schizophrenia and is known to be due to neurodevelopment changes.

**The aim of our study** was to compare verbal fluency of patients with paranoid schizophrenia (PSch), first grade relatives (FGR) and healthy control subjects (HC) and to find additional risk factors for poor verbal fluency test performances in cases with PSch.

**Material and methods.** 108 PSch (66 males, 44 females, mean age  $38.86 \pm 10.02$  y), 58 FGR (30 males, 28 females, mean age  $36.71 \pm 11.74$  y) and 60 HC (37 males, 23 females, mean age  $35.68 \pm 11.36$  y) were studied during the period 2015-2017 at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology, University Hospital Pleven, Bulgaria. After giving informed consent, they underwent full somatic and neurological examinations and fulfilled Isaac's Set Test (IST) and K, A, M, E literal fluency test (LF).

**Results.** PSch obtained lower scores on both LF and IST than other two groups. FGR had poor performance only on LF. Ageing, level of formal education,

## RÉSUMÉ

Etude comparée des résultats des tests de l'expression verbale facile chez les patients avec de la schizophrénie paranoïde, de parents au premier degré et de témoins sains

**Introduction.** Les troubles cognitifs de la schizophrénie sont un domaine d'intérêt scientifique depuis les années 70 du XX siècle. Ils constituent un symptôme clé et sont discutés en relation avec l'hypothèse d'un développement neurologique altéré dans la schizophrénie.

**Le but de notre étude** est de comparer les résultats des tests de la facilité verbale des patients atteints de schizophrénie paranoïde (PCh), de primo-nés (PN) et de témoins sains (TS).

**Matériel et méthodes.** L'étude a été menée sur 108 patients atteints de (PCh) – (66 hommes et 42 femmes, d'âge moyen à  $38,86 \pm 10,02$ ), 58 patients (PN) (30 hommes et 28 femmes, à un âge moyen de  $36,71 \pm 11,74$ ) et 60 IC. 23 femmes, d'âge moyen  $35,68 \pm 11,36$ ) au moyen du test de Isaac (IST) pour la sémantique et le type FL K-A-M-E.

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severity and duration of schizophrenia were associated with LF and IST performances.

**Conclusions.** PSch show significant LF and semantic fluency difficulties. FGR have only LF changes. Verbal fluency is related to ageing, formal education, duration and severity of schizophrenia.

**Keywords:** verbal fluency, literal fluency, semantic fluency, schizophrenia, first grade relatives.

**Résultats.** Les patients atteints de PCI présentaient des résultats inférieurs aux deux tests à la fois en IST et en FL, par rapport à PR et au PC, ainsi que des violations de la qualité des mots générés. Les IP montrent une FL inférieure à celle du CI. L'influence sur le succès des TSI et de la FL chez PSI est liée à l'âge, à l'éducation, aux années de maladie et à la gravité de la maladie, ainsi qu'à la gravité des symptômes négatifs et des symptômes de désorganisation.

**Conclusions.** Les PCh ont montré des anomalies significatives de la FL et une facilité sémantique quantitative et qualitative. Les PN montrent une FL cassée.

**Mots-clés:** expression verbale facile, facilité littérale, facilité sémantique, schizophrénie, parents au premier degré.

## Нарушение на фокусираното внимание и скоростта на обработка на информацията при болни с параноидна шизофрения

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**Увод:** Съвременната наука разглежда шизофренията, като невробиологично заболяване, в чиято основа стои базисен неврокогнитивен дефицит. Той се развива в резултат на подлежаща невропатология, обвързана с нарушения във фронталните кръгове на мозъка, които са отговорни за скоростта на информационна преработка и фокусираното внимание. Целта на настоящото проучване е да изследва фокусираното внимание и скоростта на преработка на информация при пациенти с параноидна шизофрения чрез *Digit symbol substitution test (DSST)* и да отчете техните резултати.

**Материал и методи:** Изследването е проведено спрямо 106 пациенти с параноидна шизофрения посредством DSST. Анализът на резултатите се извърши на база 95% конфиденциален интервал.

**Резултати:** Средната успеваемост на теста при болните е  $32.59 \pm 11.34$  айтъма – резултат по-нисък от средната норма на теста ( $>37$ ). При 57.5% (52) от изследваните е регистриран дефицит на вниманието и скоростта на обработка на информацията. Само 45 (42.4%) болни не дават грешки на теста, 9 (8.5%) имат 1, а останалите 52 (49%) са с повече от 1 грешки. Влияние върху резултатите на теста оказват възрастта, образователният статус, тежестта на симптоматиката (измерена с BPRS), продължителността на заболяването, но не и полът, и видът на използваната терапия.

**Изводи:** Болните с шизофрения показват дефицит на DSST, който се обвързва с нарушения във фокусираното внимание и в скоростта на обработка на информацията.

*Българско списание за психиатрия. 2017: 2(3):206-211.*

**Ключови думи:** *Digit Symbol Substitution Test, шизофрения, когнитивни нарушения, скорост на информационна преработка, фокусирано внимание.*

## Impairments of focus attention and speed of information processing in patients with paranoid schizophrenia

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**Introduction:** According to modern science schizophrenia is considered a nerobiological disease with basic neurocognitive deficit. It is developed as the result of specific neuropathological changes associated with frontal circle dysfunctions, responsible for the speed of informational processing and focused attention. The aim of our study is to access focus attention and informational processing speed among the patients with paranoid schizophrenia via *Digit symbol substitution test (DSST)*.

**Methodology:** We examined 106 patients with paranoid schizophrenia via DSST. Our data analysis is done in 95% confidential level.

**Results.** The average DSST test result is  $32.59 \pm 11.34$  items which is lower than population norms (above 37). 57.5% of our patients showed deficit. 45(42.4%) of our patients have no test errors, 9 (8.5%) have 1, and the last 52 (49%) show more than 1 errors. Ageing, educational level and duration and disease severity but not sex or type of therapy had additional influence on test results.

**Conclusions:** Patients with schizophrenia show deficits on DSST – test associated with informational processing speed and focused attention.

*Bulgarian Journal of Psychiatry. 2017, Vol 2(3):206-211.*

**Key words:** *Digit Symbol Substitution Test, schizophrenia, cognitive impairment, informational processing speed, focused attention.*

Иванка Велева

# АСПЕКТИ НА СОЦИАЛНАТА АДАПТАЦИЯ ПРИ ШИЗОФРЕНИЯ

Издателски център МУ - Плевен  
2024

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монография

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Първо издание, 2024

Рецензенти:

Проф. д-р Петър Маринов, д.м.н.

Доц. Павлина Петкова, д.м.

© Издател: ИЦ "МУ - Плевен, ул. "св. Климент Охридски" №1

Печат: "ЕА" АД, гр. Плевен, ул. "Сан Стефано" № 43

ISBN 978-954-756-345-2

## СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ

УВОД .....	9
I. Психичното здраве като актуален проблем на общественото здраве.....	12
II. КАЧЕСТВО НА ЖИВОТ .....	18
III. УВРЕЖДАНЕТО КАТО СВЕТОВЕН ЗДРАВЕН ПРОБЛЕМ .....	25
1. Глобална тежест на шизофренията .....	28
IV. ШИЗОФРЕНИЯ .....	35
1. Социална адаптация при шизофрения .....	45
2. Социално-демографски фактори и нарушение в социалната адаптация .....	52
2.1 Влияние на пола .....	52
2.2 Семейна дисфункция.....	58
2.3 Образование и заетост .....	66
2.4 Независим живот .....	75
3. Клинични симптоми и нарушения в социалното функциониране .....	78
3.1 Негативни симптоми.....	78
3.2 Симптоми на дезорганизация .....	94
4. Нарушение на несоциалното и социално познание при шизофрения.....	97
4.1 Неврокогниция.....	111
4.2 Социална когниция.....	114
5. Влияние на прозрението (инсайт) и придържането към терапията върху социалното функциониране при Шизофрения .....	137
5.1. Ефекти на прозрението върху социалното функциониране .....	137
5.2 Придържане към терапията и влияние върху социалното функциониране.....	142

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V. ПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ НА СКАЛАТА WHO-DAS 2.0 ПРИ ПАЦИЕНТИ С ШИЗОФРЕНИЯ.....	147
VI. КОГНИТИВЕН РЕЗЕРВ.....	171
VII. ПСИХОСОЦИАЛНА РЕХАБИЛИТАЦИЯ.....	173
БИБЛИОГРАФИЯ .....	186
РЕЦЕНЗИИ .....	219

## УВОД

Бързо променящият се характер на околната среда налага все по-високи изисквания към адаптивните възможности на личността, която трябва не само да поддържа равновесие в хомеостазата, но и да е част от „интегрираното цяло“ и „организираната съвкупност“, каквото е обществото.<sup>[99]</sup> Проблемите, свързани с пълноценното участие на психично болните хора в социалния живот на обществото се обостриха съществено през последните десетилетия. Това отчасти се дължи на нарастването на психичните заболявания, големите икономически загуби поради настъпилата инвалидност на пациентите, с разходите за тяхната издръжка и лечение, и парадоксално – с успехите на психофармакологията, психологичната и социална рехабилитации, увеличаващи продължителността на живот на психично болните. От друга стена индустриализацията и въвеждането на нови технологии поставят все по-големи изисквания към личността. Излизането на пациенти извън стените на психиатричните стационари повдига въпроси за връзката между увредената личност и обществото, за тяхното взаимно влияние, за ролята на социума във формирането на психопатологията. Тези въпроси инициираха многобройни изследвания, които формират основата на ново направление – социална психиатрия. Изследователският фокус все повече се насочва към етиката на микросоциалните взаимоотношения. От съществена важност е не само да се осигурят достъпни услуги в областта на психичното здраве, но също така, да се информира и образова обществото за съществуването на професионална помощ, да се води непрекъсната борба с предразсъдъците и стереотипите, препятстващи своевременното търсене и оказване на специализирана психиатрична помощ. Основна характеристика на шизофренната болест е социалното изключване. Пациентите с шизофрения имат по-ограничени социални връзки и по-нездоволителни междуличностни взаимоотношения от здравите хора или от пациентите с други психични разстройства. Съществуват редица фактори, които не се изключват взаимно и потенциално допринасят за социалното изключване на пациентите – странно поведение,

предизвикващо страх у другите; липса на социална мотивация; трудности в междуличностните взаимодействия, произтичащи от деструкция във взприемането и представянето на реалността; стигмата и дефицитите в социалното функциониране. Два от посочените фактори са получили специално внимание:

- ❖ Болестта се движи от вътрешно присъщи за разстройството дефицити на социалното функциониране;
- ❖ Стигматизация и етикетиране като „психично болен“ или „шизофреник“.

Въвеждането на антипсихотиците през 50-те години на миналия век промени лечението на шизофренната болест. Очакваше се, че овладяването на психотичните симптоми ще бъде придружено с подобрена интеграция на пациентите в общността, но това не се случи. Okaza se, че повечето от антипсихотиците повлияват психопатологичните прояви на болестта, но оказват несъществено влияние върху функционирането. Беше необходимо време за да се оцени ключовата разлика между ремисия (т.е. намаляване/ отстраняване на симптомите) и възстановяване (т.е. пълноценно участие в социални, трудови и независими дейности), което зависи от редица ко-фактори, включително и от когницията.

Социалната и трудова дезадаптация на пациентите с психични и поведенчески разстройства са сериозен проблем както за тях самите, за техните роднини и приятелите им, така и за обществото. Ранното начало на заболяването, прогресирацият му ход и нарушеното социално функциониране водят до чести и продължителни хоспитализации, и ранно инвалидизиране. Стационарното лечение откъсва пациентите от семейството, приятелите и колегите. Пълноценни живот и социална интеграция са осъществими само при наличие на правилно лечение, системен контрол на състоянието и адекватни социална рехабилитация и подпомагане. Съвременният цялостен подход към грижите за психичното здраве изисква индивидуално мониториране на социални,

трудови и персонални фактори, както и оценката на пациента за качеството на собствения му живот.

Шизофренията е хронично и изтощително заболяване, което в глобален аспект засяга приблизително 21 милиона възрастни. Разпространението през целия живот е около 1% в световен мащаб. [326] Дебютът на заболяването обикновено се наблюдава при лица на възраст от 16 до 30 години. Диагнозата се базира най-вече на позитивните симптоми. Другите кълстери на симптомите – негативни, когнитивни и общо психопатологични също са изявени и допринасят значително за инвалидизацията и функционалните увреждания на заболелите. През целия живот ходът на болестта варира от екзацербации на симптомите (обостряния), последвани от периоди на ремисия, докато настъпи рецидив. Шизофренията е хронично заболяване и трайните позитивни и негативни симптоми изискват безопасно и ефективно дългосрочно лечение. В здравния класификатор на СЗО шизофренията е включена като една от седемте най-инвалидизиращи заболявания при възрастни между 20 и 45 години, „изпреварвайки“ диабета, сърдечно-съдовите заболявания и ХИВ/СПИН [176]. Различни изследователи докладват, че от 40% до 80% от пациентите с шизофрения имат намалена способност за учене и работа, самостоятелен живот, самообслужване, базисни житейски умения и хармонични междуличностни отношения. [176]



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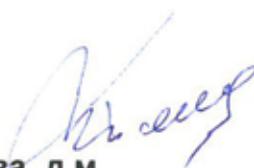
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Изх. № NID 0696/12.09.2024 г.

### СЛУЖЕБНА БЕЛЕЖКА

Настоящата се издава на д-р Иванка Илиева Велева, д.м., Факултет „Обществено здраве“ на МУ – Плевен, в уверение на това, че монография със заглавие „Аспекти на социалната адаптация при шизофрения“ е под печат и има ISBN: 978-954-756-345-2. Предстои отпечатване през месец септември 2024 г.



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## **METOCLOPRAMIDE – INDUCED EXTRAPYRAMIDAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS – BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CASE REPORT.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

**Introduction:** Metoclopramide is a dopamine receptor agonist and well known antiemetic and gastrokinetic agent. Its usage has been restricted by European Medicines Agency (EMA), because of acute and chronic neurological adverse events. Extrapyramidal syndromes, including parkinsonism, tardive dyskinesia, akathisia and acute dystonias, are the most reported and most often drug side effects.

**Contingent and methods:** We present a case of 23 years old woman with a 3-year history of Metoclopramide-induced recurrent oculogyric crises.

**Results:** The patient suffered from examinophobia, with minimal benzodiazepine symptoms relief. She willfully took small dosages of oral Metoclopramide for nausea relief before her examinations, which lead to recurrent oculogyric crises, short after the drug intake. After a detailed explanation of drug side effects and medicine discontinuation, they disappeared. She had no significant medical and family history of neurological and psychiatric conditions. Laboratory data were normal.

**Conclusions:** Metoclopramide could induce acute or chronic neurological conditions and its usage should be restricted in general population to some specific conditions. Some of its adverse reactions are often misdiagnosed and improperly treated. Critical drug anamnesis with a focus on Metoclopramide usage in some cases could enhance diagnosis.

**Key words:** Metoclopramide side effects, dopamine antagonist, oculogyric crises.

## ORIGINAL PAPER

# IMPACT OF VASCULAR RISK FACTORS ON COGNITIVE DECLINE ASSOCIATED WITH DIABETES MELLITUS

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Received 20 Jun 2019, Accepted 04 August 2019

<https://doi.org/10.31688/ABMU.2019.54.3.14>

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** Vascular risk factors have been associated with cognitive decline, although their simultaneous effects on cognition are unclear.

**The aim of our study** was to examine the additional impact of some of the most important risk factors (ageing, arterial hypertension (AH), chronic ischemic heart disease (CIHD), tobacco-usage and alcohol) on cognitive functions of patients with diabetes mellitus (DM).

**Material and methods.** We examined 115 patients (average age  $62.47 \pm 10.60$  years; 49 males, 66 females) with DM (mean disease duration  $9.28 \pm 6.88$  years), admitted between 2016-2017 in the Neurology Clinic of the University Hospital „Sofiamed“, Sofia, Bulgaria. We used the following neuropsychological battery: Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), Isaack Set Test, 10 words memory test, Digit Symbol Substitution Test, Trail Making Test A and B, Clock drawing test, Logic memory test (subscale of Wechsler memory scale IV ed.), Benton visual retention test (var. A, form E). The results were summarized in tables. All the results were analyzed in 95% confidence interval.

**Results.** Ageing was associated with a poor cognitive performance in almost all examined cognitive

### RÉSUMÉ

L'impact de différents facteurs de risque vasculaires sur le déclin cognitif associés au diabète sucré

**Introduction.** Les facteurs de risque vasculaire sont associés au déclin cognitif, bien que leurs effets simultanés sur la cognition ne soient pas clairs.

**Le but de notre étude** était d'étudier l'impact supplémentaire de certains des facteurs de risque les plus importants (vieillissement, hypertension artérielle (HA), cardiopathie ischémique chronique (CIC), consommation de tabac et d'alcool sur la fonction cognitive des patients atteints de diabète sucré.

**Matériaux et méthodes.** Nous avons étudié 115 patients atteints de diabète sucré (âge moyen:  $62,47 \pm 10,60$  ans, 49 hommes, 66 femmes, durée moyenne de la maladie:  $9,28 \pm 6,8$  ans), hospitalisés entre 2016-2017 à la clinique de neurologie de l'hôpital universitaire Sofiamed de Sofia. Nous avons utilisé la batterie neuropsychologique suivante: mini-examen de l'état mental (MMSE), test d'Isaack Set, test d'apprentissage de 10 mots, test de substitution du symbole des chiffres, test de détermination du parcours A et B, Clock drawing test et test de Benton (var. A, formulaire E).

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domains, except MMSE. CIHD is associated with low Digit Symbol Substitution Test points and more omissions and size errors on Benton Visual Retention Test.

**Conclusions.** Ageing is associated with decline in visual and verbal memory, executive functions and visual-spatial abilities in cases with DM. CIHD leads to additional alternating attention deficits in patients with DM. AH, tobacco-usage and mild and moderate alcohol drinking are not significantly associated with additional cognitive dysfunctions in cases with DM.

**Keywords:** vascular risk factors, cognitive decline, diabetes mellitus, arterial hypertension.

Les résultats sont résumés dans les tableaux. Tous les résultats sont analysés à un intervalle de confiance de 95%.

**Résultats.** Le vieillissement est associé à des performances médiocres dans presque tous les domaines cognitifs examinés, à l'exception du MMSE. Le CIC est associé à un nombre réduit de points DSST et à davantage d'erreurs de type et de taille dans le test de rétention optique de Benton.

**Conclusions.** Le vieillissement du diabète sucré est associé à une diminution de la mémoire visuelle et verbale, des fonctions exécutives et des capacités visuelles et spatiales. CIC chez les patients atteints de diabète sucré provoque des déficits d'attention supplémentaires. HA, le tabagisme et la consommation d'alcool léger à modéré ne sont pas associés de manière significative à des dysfonctionnements cognitifs supplémentaires.

**Mots-clés:** facteurs de risque vasculaire, déclin cognitif, diabète sucré, hypertension artérielle.

## ORIGINAL PAPER

# DO PERSONAL TRAITS MODERATE COGNITIVE ABILITIES IN DIABETES MELLITUS?

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Received 11 Jan 2019, Accepted 28 Febr 2019

<https://doi.org/10.31688/ABMU.2019.54.1.19>

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** The association between cognitive functions and personal traits is a question of interest and debate. Diabetes mellitus is associated with cognitive changes.

**The aim of our study** was to find if any relations exist between cognitive functions and personal traits in persons with diabetes.

**Material and methods.** We examined 115 patients (average age  $62.47 \pm 10.60$  years; 49 males, 66 females) with diabetes (13 with diabetes type 1 and 102 with type 2 diabetes; mean duration of disease  $9.28 \pm 6.8$  years), admitted during 2016-2017 in the Neurology Clinic of the University Hospital „Sofiamed“, Sofia, Bulgaria. After having signed the informed consent, all patients underwent full somatic and neurological examination, and fulfilled specific neuropsychological tests and personal questionnaire (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory 2, MMPI).

**Results.** We found statistically significant associations between MMPI subscales and cognitive domains.

**Conclusions.** Our data analysis shows significant associations between cognitive functions and personal traits. We suggest that cognitive-focused therapy can improve some negative personal traits and vice versa.

## RÉSUMÉ

**Est-ce qu'il y a une influence des traits personnels sur les habilités cognitives en cas de diabète sucré ?**

**Introduction.** La relation entre le fonctionnement cognitif et les traits de personnalité est une question d'intérêt et de débat. Le diabète est associé à des changements cognitifs et de la personnalité.

**Le but de notre étude** était de découvrir les interrelations entre les fonctions cognitives et les traits de personnalité des patients atteints de diabète.

**Matériels et méthodes.** Nous avons examiné 115 patients atteints de diabète (âge moyen  $62,47 \pm 10,60$ , 49 hommes, 66 femmes), dont 13 personnes atteintes de diabète de type 1 et 102 atteintes de diabète de type 2 admis, pendant la période 2016-2017, à la Clinique de Neurologie de l'Hôpital Universitaire « Sofiamed » de Sofia, Bulgarie. Après avoir donné leur accord écrit, tous les patients ont été soumis à un examen neurologique complet et ont complété des tests neuropsychologiques et un questionnaire individualisé (Inventaire de personnalité multiphasique de Minnesota 2).

**Résultats.** Nous avons trouvé des associations statistiquement significatives entre les sous-classes de PIMM et les domaines cognitifs.

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**Do personal traits moderate cognitive abilities in diabetes mellitus? – VALKOVA et al**

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**Keywords:** diabetes mellitus, MMPI, cognitive functioning, personal traits.

**Conclusions.** Notre analyse de données montre des associations significatives entre le fonctionnement cognitif et les traits de personnalité. Nous supposons qu'une thérapie cognitive peut améliorer certains traits de personnalité négatifs et inversement.

**Mots-clés:** diabète sucré, MMPI, fonctionnement cognitif, traits personnels.



# Socio-Demographic and Clinical Characteristics of Psychiatric Patients Who Have Committed Suicide: Analysis of Bulgarian Regional Suicidal Registry for 10 Years

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## OPEN ACCESS

**Edited by:**

Wulf Rössler,  
Charité – Universitätsmedizin  
Berlin, Germany

**Reviewed by:**

Qi Wang,  
The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong, SAR China  
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**Specialty section:**

This article was submitted to  
Public Mental Health,  
a section of the journal  
*Frontiers in Psychiatry*

**Received:** 07 February 2021

**Accepted:** 27 July 2021

**Published:** 19 August 2021

**Citation:**

Stoychev K, Dimitrova E, Nakov V, Stoimenova-Popova M, Chumpalova P, Veleva I, Mineva-Dimitrova E and Dekov D (2021) Socio-Demographic and Clinical Characteristics of Psychiatric Patients Who Have Committed Suicide: Analysis of Bulgarian Regional Suicidal Registry for 10 Years. *Front. Psychiatry* 12:665154.  
doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2021.665154

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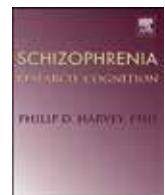
**Introduction:** Suicide is a major public health problem but factors determining suicide risk are still unclear. Studies in this field in Bulgaria are limited, especially on a regional level.

**Methods:** By a cross-sectional design, we accessed the medical records of all psychiatric patients committed suicide over a 10-year period (2009–2018) in one major administrative region of Bulgaria. A statistical analysis was performed of the association between age of suicide as an indirect yet measurable expression of the underlying suicidal diathesis and a number of socio-demographic and clinical characteristics.

**Results:** Seventy-seven of 281 suicides (28%) had psychiatric records. Most common diagnoses were mood disorders (44%), followed by schizophrenia (27%), anxiety disorders (10%), substance use disorders (9%) and organic conditions (8%). Male gender, single/divorced marital status, early illness onset, co-occurring substance misuse and lower educational attainment (for patients aged below 70) were significantly associated with earlier age of suicide whereas past suicide attempts and psychiatric hospitalizations, comorbid somatic conditions and unemployment showed insignificant association. Substantial proportion of patients (60%) had contacted psychiatric service in the year preceding suicide, with nearly half of these encounters being within 30 days of the accident.

**Conclusion:** Severe mental disorders are major suicide risk factor with additional contribution of certain socio-demographic and illness-related characteristics. Monitoring for suicidality must be constant in chronic psychiatric patients. Registration of suicide cases in Bulgaria needs improvement in terms of information concerning mental health. More studies with larger samples and longitudinal design are needed to further elucidate distal and proximal suicide risk factors.

**Keywords:** suicide, risk factors, study, Bulgaria, mental disorders



Research Paper

**Toxoplasma gondii seropositivity and cognitive function in adults with schizophrenia**



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ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**

Schizophrenia  
Toxoplasmosis  
Cognitive functions  
Impairment

ABSTRACT

**Introduction and methods:** Based on the limited research focusing on the severity of cognitive deterioration in schizophrenia with preceding toxoplasmosis, we sampled 89 demographically matched paranoid schizophrenia patients (mean age 38.97 years) with ( $n = 42$ ) and without ( $n = 47$ ) seroprevalence of IgG type anti *T. gondii* antibodies as marker of past infection. They underwent examination of verbal memory (10 words Luria test), logical memory and visual memory (BVRT), processing speed (TMT-A/DSST) and executive functions (TMT-B/verbal fluency). We compared the results of both groups, taking into account the normative values for the Bulgarian population where available. We also compared the two groups in terms of clinical severity as evidenced by positive, negative and disorganization sub-scores of the PANSS.

**Results:** While both groups were expectedly under the population norms for verbal and logical memory, seropositive patients showed significantly bigger impairment in verbal memory (Luria Smax = 72.85 vs 78.51;  $p = 0.029$ ), psychomotor speed (TMT-A 50.98 s vs 44.64 s;  $p = 0.017$ ), semantic verbal fluency (27.12 vs 30.02;  $p = 0.011$ ) and literal verbal fluency (17.17 vs 18.78;  $p = 0.014$ ) compared to the seronegative ones. In addition to that, they gave less correct answers on the BVRT (2.98 vs 4.09;  $p = 0.006$ ) while making markedly more errors (13.95 vs 10.21;  $p = 0.002$ ). Despite not reaching statistical significance, past toxoplasmosis was associated with higher score on the PANSS disorganization sub-scale (16.50 points vs 14.72 points) and with lower educational attainment.

**Conclusion:** Our results suggest a more profound neuropathological insult(s) resulting in greater cognitive impairment in schizophrenia cases that are exposed to *T. gondii* infection.



Article

# Impact of Cognitive Disturbances and Clinical Symptoms on Disability in Patients with Paranoid Schizophrenia: A Study of a Bulgarian Clinical Sample

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to assess the impact of clinical symptoms and cognitive impairment on disability in patients with paranoid schizophrenia (PS). Methods: 108 patients with schizophrenia were included (66 male and 42 female). Their average age was  $38.86 \pm 10.02$  years and the disease duration was  $12.80 \pm 8.20$  years, with mean disease onset of 24 years. Clinical symptoms were assessed with the PANSS, and cognitive performance was measured using a seven-item neurocognitive battery. The disability level of the subjects was assessed using the World Health Organization—Disability Assessment Schedule 2.0 (WHO-DAS 2.0). The relation between the variables studied was assessed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) at a probability level of  $p < 0.05$ . Results: An increase in symptom severity resulted in worsening of the “participation in society” ( $r = 0.56, p < 0.01$ ), “life activities—household” ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), and “getting along with people” ( $r = 0.59, p < 0.01$ ) WHO-DAS 2.0 domains. Positive symptoms ( $13.89 \pm 3.48$ ) correlated strongly with “getting along with people” ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), “life activities—household” ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ), and “participation in society” ( $r = 0.62, p < 0.01$ ), and negative symptoms ( $14.25 \pm 4.16$ ) with “participation in society” ( $r = 0.53, p < 0.01$ ) and “life activities—household” ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ). Symptoms of disorganization ( $15.67 \pm 4.16$ ) had the highest impact on “life activities—household” ( $r = 0.81, p < 0.01$ ), “getting along with people” ( $r = 0.56, p < 0.05$ ), and “participation in society” ( $r = 0.65, p < 0.01$ ). Episodic memory ( $r = -0.28, p < 0.01$ ) was remotely related to comprehension and communication. The information processing speed ( $r_s = 0.38, p < 0.01$ ), visual memory ( $r_s = -0.30, p < 0.01$ ), and focused executive functions showed moderate correlations with all domains on the WHO-DAS 2.0 scale ( $r_s = 0.38, p < 0.01$ ). Attention ( $r_s = -0.33, p < 0.01$ ) was moderately related to community activities. Semantic ( $r_s = -0.29, p < 0.01$ ) and literal ( $r_s = -0.27, p < 0.01$ ) verbal fluency demonstrated weak correlations with “cognition—understanding”, “getting along with people”, and “participation in society”. Conclusion: Symptoms of disorganization and disturbed executive functions contribute most to disability in patients with schizophrenia through impairment of real-world functioning, especially in social interactions and communication. Severe clinical symptoms (negative and disorganization-related ones) as well as deficits in executive function, verbal memory, and verbal fluency cause the biggest problems in the functional domains of interaction with other people and participation in society.



**Citation:** Veleva, I.; Stoychev, K.; Stoimenova-Popova, M.; Mineva-Dimitrova, E. Impact of Cognitive Disturbances and Clinical Symptoms on Disability in Patients with Paranoid Schizophrenia: A Study of a Bulgarian Clinical Sample. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2023**, *20*, 2459. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20032459>

Academic Editors: Drozdstoy Stoyanov and Giuseppe Delvecchio

Received: 22 November 2022

Revised: 15 January 2023

Accepted: 20 January 2023

Published: 30 January 2023



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**Keywords:** schizophrenia; disability; WHO-DAS 2.0; positive; negative; cognitive symptoms; psychosocial functioning

## 1. Introduction

Schizophrenia is a severe mental illness that, despite its relatively low prevalence of approximately 1% [1,2], is ranked as the 12th most disabling disorder among 310 diseases and injuries worldwide. Starting in early adulthood and having a chronic course with incomplete remissions in most cases, schizophrenia causes enormous social burden and



Original article

## **POST-STROKE DEPRESSION AND ITS RISK FACTORS – CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

**Introduction:** Post-stroke depression (PSD) is one of the leading, although preventable complications, after ischemic stroke (IS). Our study aimed to examine PSD and the leading causes for its development

**Contingent and methods:** In this cross-sectional study, we examined 107 post-stroke survivors ( $66.67 \pm 9.03$  years old, 65 males and 42 females) for PSD in a two-step model (at the acute stage and at the 3rd month after stroke) with 21 Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS).

**Results:** 33% of examined patients showed depression at the acute and 30% at the chronic IS stage. 1/4 to 1/3 of the others had subclinical depression. The severity of depression in most of the cases was mild. Very few of our patients (2 at the acute stage and 1 at the chronic stroke stage) had severe depression. The main risk factors for PSD were stroke severity, subcortical localization of stroke, leukoaraiosis, ageing, loneliness and some comorbidities (that lead to systemic inflammation, changes in neurotransmission and impaired brain plasticity).

**Conclusion:** PSD is one of the main complications of acute IS. It should be assessed, prevented and treated as soon as possible.

**Keywords:** post-stroke depression, risk factors,



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## STATISTICAL RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF SUICIDES IN THE PLEVEN DISTRICT – BULGARIA FOR A 10-YEAR PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

Suicides are an important and current social and medical problem of the modern society.

According to the National statistics for the period 2000-2010 in Bulgaria there have been 11646 suicides or death due to intentional self-harm. The objective of this study is to research the dynamics and structure of suicides in the county of Pleven for the past ten years, distributions based on gender, age, place of residence, chronobiology, cause of death, as well as other details.

Subject of retrospective analysis is forensic medicine reports from the archives of the Department of Forensic Medicine at the Medical University-Pleven.

366 cases were investigated over a period of 2008 to 2017 years. The results show that men are 230 (62.8%) and women 136 (37.2%). The same ratio applies between residents in town and village. The highest is the number of suicides in the age interval between 61 and 70 years. According to the causes of death, the highest number is due to hanging -176 cases or 48%, followed by jumping from high buildings and poisoning. In 14% of cases presence of alcohol in the blood was found. Most suicides occur in March, followed by June and July, and according to days of the week - on Tuesdays and Fridays. The blood types of the suicidants in the district of Pleven were compared to those in the district of Plovdiv, as well as the distribution for the whole Republic of Bulgaria. Finally, there is a comparison of similarities and differences with the results of other studies.

**Key words:** suicide, forensic medicine report, statistics.



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## DEATH AT THE WORKPLACE IN THE PLEVEN DISTRICT FOR A PERIOD OF 10 YEARS (STUDY, BASED ON THE FORENSIC MEDICINE ARCHIVE REPORTS AND PRESENTATION OF TWO CASES OF LABOR ACCIDENTS)

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is the dynamics, structure, number, type, character and causes of death of persons, who have died at their workplace in the district of Pleven.

Using statistical-descriptive and archival-documentary methods of investigation, 53 forensic medical expertise for the study of a corpse from the archives of the Department of Forensic Medicine of the Medical University of Pleven for the period from 2008 to 2017 years were investigated. 18 cases of sudden cardiac death, 33 cases of death from occupational accidents and 2 cases of suicide in the workplace have been identified.

The ratio of males to females is 9.6: 1. The ratio of urban to rural population is 3: 1. The highest mortality rate is between the ages of 41 and 50 (15 cases or 28%), with the age groups 51-60 and 61-70 being the second most frequent.

The most common causes of death are mechanical trauma, followed by asphyxia. Approximately half of the mechanical trauma cases are a fall from a height during construction works.

According to the days of the week most frequent the incidents happen on Monday, and according to the month of the year - in May and July.

Two interesting expert cases of death from an accident at the workplace were also presented.

**Key words:** labor accident, death at the workplace, causes of death.

## Longitudinal Study on Early Post-Stroke Cognitive Impairment

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**Key words:**  
cognitive impairment  
ischemic stroke

**Objective:** Cognitive decline after ischemic stroke (IS) is a form of vascular cognitive impairment. There are very few studies on frequency of early post-stroke cognitive impairments and their time-dynamics, despite the increasing number of studies on vascular cognitive impairment and stroke. The purpose of our study was to examine the frequency and time-dynamics of early post-stroke cognitive impairments.

**Material and methods:** We examined 109 post-stroke survivors and 112 corresponding by sex, age and level of education control subjects via Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE). Patients were examined twice: during the first three days (stage 1) and at the 90th day (stage 2) after the incident. All patients underwent clinical examination, laboratory and computer tomography studies. No one was suitable for thrombolysis. All results were interpreted at 95% confidential level.

**Results:** There is a statistically significant difference between patients' and controls' results. There was no difference between MMSE results at the first and second study stages, except for the patients examined at the first day after the IS ( $p=0.0001$ ), who showed significant improvement with 1.66 points. Most of the post-stroke survivors at the first study stage had mild cognitive impairment (36%), followed by those with moderate (33%) and borderline (29%). Patients with mild cognitive decline prevailed again at the second stage (44%), with moderate impairment were 28%, and with borderline -18% of the cases.

**Conclusion:** Cognitive impairment after ischemic stroke is observed in high percent of the patients, with prevalence of the mild level. The cognitive improvement during the first 3 months can be considered insignificant so MMSE may be a good predictor for later cognitive functioning.

## Лонгитудинално проучване на ранни когнитивни нарушения след исхемичен мозъчен инсулт

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**Ключови думи:**  
исхемичен инсулт  
когнитивни нарушения

**Цел:** Когнитивният дефицит след исхемичен мозъчен инсулт (ИМИ) е форма на въздушарен когнитивен дефицит. Въпреки множеството проучвания по въпроса, на настоящия етап са малко тези, оценявачи честотата на ранните когнитивни нарушения и тяхната динамика във времето. Целта на нашето проучване е да изследваме честотата и динамиката на ранните когнитивни нарушения след инсулт.

**Материал и методи:** Изследвахме 109 пациенти след леки и умерени ИМИ и 112 контроли, съответни по пол, възраст и образователен статус, посредством Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), при хоспитализацията и 90 дни след нея. Всички болни бяха оценени клинично, лабораторно и посредством компютърна томография на глава. Нито един от тях не бе подходящ за тромболиза. Всички резултати бяха оценени в 95% конфиденциален интервал.

**Резултати:** Резултатите на нашите пациенти се отличаваха значимо от тези на контролите. Не бе установена значителна динамика в MMSE между I и II етап на проучването, с изключение на изследваните още на 1-я ден след инцидента ( $p=0.0001$ ), които показваха подобрене със средно +1.66 точки. Повечето паци-

енти на първи етап от проучването имаха лек когнитивен дефицит (36%), следвани от умерен когнитивен дефицит (33%), а гранично нарушение бе наблюдавано в 29% от случаите. На втори етап отново преобладаваха пациентите с лек дефицит (44%), следвани от тези с умерен (28%), гранично нарушение бе наблюдавано в 18% от случаите.

**Заключение:** Когнитивен дефицит след ИМИ се наблюдава във висок процент от случаите, като преобладава леката степен. Когнитивното подобрение в първите три месеца е незначително, поради което изходното MMSE (още на 2-ри и 3-ти ден след ИМИ) може да се счита за добър предиктор за по-късното когнитивно функциониране.

## PROCESSING SPEED AS AN ENDOPHENOTYPIC MARKER OF PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIA

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### Summary

Schizophrenia is associated with basic neurocognitive deficit – ineffective space-time information assessment, leading to ineffective judgment and planning of behaviour. Our study aimed to examine and compare the psychomotor speed and number of errors in patients with paranoid schizophrenia (PS), first-degree relatives (FDR) and healthy controls (HC). One-hundred-eight patients with PS, 58 with FDR and 60 HCs were examined via Trail Making Tests (TMT) A and B. The influence of other additional factors as The Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS), demographics and education were additionally assessed for PS. Statistical analysis was done using Excel 2010, Statgraphics 5.0+ and SPSS 20. All results were interpreted at 95% confidential level. PS showed most unsatisfactory performances on TMT A and B, as compared to others ( $p=0.0001$ ). However, FDR differed from HC only in TMTB performance ( $p=0.0241$ ). The most significant impact in PS group included ageing, education, PANSS and negative syndromes, and syndromes of disorganization. PS showed a significant decline of psychomotor speed and executive functioning, although FDR had average results in TMTB, compared to PS and HC. The above results determined both detentions as endophenotype markers for PS. Additional risk factors for decline include ageing, low education and high PANSS results.

**Key words:** paranoid schizophrenia, endophenotype, processing speed

## РЯДЪК СЛУЧАЙ НА КОМПЛЕКСНО САМОУБИЙСТВО, ЧРЕЗ ИЗПОЛЗВАНЕ НА ТРИ СПОСОБА

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## A RARE CASE OF COMPLEX SUICIDE, IN WHICH, THREE DISTINCT METHODS WERE SIMULTANEOUSLY APPLIED

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### SUMMARY

Suicides are considered complex, when two or more methods are used to achieve death. Complex suicides might be substratified into planned and not planned. In planned complex suicides, the use of more than one method is premeditated. In not planned suicides, the suicide spontaneously chooses alternative suicide method, after the first applied method proves ineffective.

The present report is dedicated to a rare case of complex suicide, performed by simultaneous application of three different methods: medicine poisoning, wrist cut with a knife and hanging. The victim, male individual, was mentally ill patient, suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. His past medical history was significant for three unsuccessful suicide attempts by self-poisoning with drugs. A retrospective investigation and analyses of the patients’ psychiatric status was carried out.

**Key words:** complex suicide, methods do suicide.

**МЕТАБОЛИТЕН СИНДРОМ И КОГНИТИВНА ДИСФУНКЦИЯ: НОВИ  
ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ЗА РАННА ДИАГНОСТИКА**

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**METABOLITE SYNDROME AND COGNITIVE DECLINE:  
NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR EARLY DIAGNOSTICATION**

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**Abstract:**

Early diagnostication of cerebrovascular pathology can prevent and delay progression of some pathological disorders such as vascular cognitive impairment. The objective of the study was to investigate new methods for detection of Metabolic Syndrome (MetS) and cognitive decline. A cardiological and neuropsychological study was conducted among 75 Bulgarian participants. Beta amyloid in blood, procalcitonin (PCT), NT-proBNP as predictors of cognitive impairment in patients with metabolic syndrome were identified. In the present study, plasma levels of A $\beta$ 42 and A $\beta$ 40 were found to be reduced in MetS participants. An inverse relation between NT-proBNP and diastolic blood pressure, waist circumference, triglycerides, HDL- and LDL cholesterol was found. There was a positive association between PCT levels, decreased levels of A $\beta$ 42 and A $\beta$ 40, as well as elevated NT-proBNP and cognitive impairment in people with MetC.

**Key words:** metabolic syndrome, cognitive decline, biomarkers.

## Science & Research

### THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STABLE CHRONIC ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE, ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ARTERIAL HYPERTENSION AND THE SEVERITY OF COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT AFTER FIRST EVER ISCHEMIC STROKE.

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#### **Summary:**

Introduction: Post-stroke cognitive impairment (PCI) is associated with poor outcome and low quality of life. Stroke is associated with high level of vascular and heart pathology. The aim of our study was to examine the impact of stable chronic ischemic heart disease (CIHD), atrial fibrillation (AF) and arterial hypertension (AH) on PCI.

Material and methods: We examined 109 patients (67 males and 42 females) at first three days and at 90<sup>th</sup> day after the first ever ischemic stroke (with average result on National health stroke scale 12.23±2.50 points) via Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), 10words Luria test for verbal memory (working memory and delayed recall at 30<sup>th</sup> minute), Isaack Set Test (IST) and Benton visual retention test (BVRT, variant A, E). 45 of them were with CIHD, 89 with AH and 18 AF. All results were interpreted at 95% confidential level.

Results: The AH and AF had no significant influences on our tests, although the low arterial pressure was associated with poor MMSE test results at 90<sup>th</sup> day ( $p=0.0348$ ). Patients with CIHD showed lower MMSE test results at 90<sup>th</sup> day than those without ( $p=0.0149$ ), lower first and 90<sup>th</sup> day verbal working memory ( $p=0.0316$ ,  $p=0.0074$ ) and delayed recall ( $p=0.0118$ ), lower points on 1<sup>st</sup> day IST ( $p=0.0122$ ) and 90<sup>th</sup> day IST ( $p=0.0165$ ) and more errors on 90<sup>th</sup> day BVRT ( $p=0.0177$ ).

Conclusions: CIHD is associated with memory and processing speed worsening after stroke. Not AH, but maintaining low blood pressure is related to poor global cognitive performance. AF has no additional impact on PCI.

**Key words:** cognitive impairment, arterial hypertension, atrial fibrillation, stable chronic ischemic heart disease, stroke



# РАЗПРОСТРАНЕНИЕ, КОМОРБИДНОСТ И ОЦЕНКА НА **ПРЕМЕНСТРУАЛНО ДИСФОРИЧНО РАЗСТРОЙСТВО** В МОДЕЛА НА ГЛОБАЛНАТА ТЕЖЕСТ НА БОЛЕСТТА



## Въведение

доц. д-р Мая Стоименова-Попова, д-р Александър Тодоров, д-р Иванка Велева, д-р Емилия Димитрова, д-р Людмила Тумбев

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Пременструалните разстройства се характеризират с група соматични и психологични симптоми с различна тежест, които се появяват по време на лутеалната фаза на менструалния цикъл и отзивчат се по време на менструация. Тези разстройства са признати като засягащи безброй жени в продължение на десетилетия, но за разлика от повечето други медицински състояния липсват общи приети критерии за дефиниция, диагностика и терапевтичен протокол. В литературата процентът на разпространение е крайно хетерогенен, в зависимост от използваните диагностични критерии, методите за оценка и етно-културната специфи-

ка на изследваните популации. Един от най-важните критерии е индуцираното увреждане, като избягване на социални дейности или търсене на медицинска помощ. По този начин разпространението през целия живот се оценява между 75 и 85%, ако се има предвид докладът за един или няколко симптома, между 10 и 15% в случай на искане за медицинска помощ и между 2 и 5% в случай на прекъсване на социалните дейности<sup>[1]</sup>.

Пременструалните нарушения, а именно пременструалният синдром (ПМС) и пременструалното дисфорично разстройство (ПМДР) са група от физически, когнитивни, афективни и поведенчески симптоми, които се появяват циклично по време на лутеалната фаза на менструа-

лния цикъл и отзивчат се в рамките на цикъла или няколко дни след началото на менструацията<sup>[2]</sup>. Отличителната черта на пременструалния синдром (ПМС) и пременструалното дисфорично разстройство (ПМДР) е предсказуемият, цикличен характер на симптомите или отчетливо включване/изключване, което започва в късната лутеална фаза на менструалния цикъл и изчезва малко след началото на менструацията. PMDD се отличава от PMS по тежестта на симптомите, преобладаването на симптомите на настроението и ролевата дисфункция особено в личните взаимоотношения и бракната/семейната сфера.

Обективно се приема, че голям дял от жените в репродуктивна въз-

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# Марихуана при лечение на болков синдром – за и против

През последното десетилетие сме свидетели на все по-широва дискусия в професионалните среди и в медиите относно терапевтичните свойства на канабиноидите и възможното използване на марихуана в медицинската практика. Канабиноидите са били споменати във Фармакопеята още през 30-те години на ХХ век заради антибактериалното и аналгетичното си действие, като вещества, което намалява вътрешното налягане; като терапия при диария и за повишаване на апетита. Разбира се, пушенето на марихуана с цел лечение на някои болести е много спорен подход от етична и професионална гледна точка. Един от съществените проблеми е дозирането, защото ако марихуаната се пуши е практически невъзможно прецизното й дозиране. Това става заради неизвестната концентрация на ТНС във всяка цигара и невъзможността да се контролира дълбочината на вдишването и времето на задържане на дима в дроба. Логично е твърдението, че щом не можем да дозираме едно вещество, то не може да се използва за лечение<sup>11</sup>.



## ВЛИЯНИЕ НА КОГНИТИВНИТЕ НАРУШЕНИЯ ВЪРХУ ИНВАЛИДНОСТТА ПРИ БОЛНИ С ПАРАНОИДНА ШИЗОФРЕНИЯ

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### Въведение

Шизофренията е тежко психично разстройство, от което по данни на Световна Здравна Организация (СЗО) към 2018 г. са засегнати над 21 милиона души. В целия свят тази болест е свързана със значително увреждане и често засяга обучението, и професионалните дейности. Нарушението в психиката и поведението възникващи в хода на заболяването изключват от активна дейност почти 1% от населението в трудоспособна възраст и водят до значителна социална дезадаптация.

Шизофренията причинява висока степен на увреждане, което представлява 1,1% от общите DALY (години на живот, адаптирани към уврежданията) и 2,8% от YLD (години, преживени с увреждане). В световен мащаб във възрастовата група 15–44 години шизофренията е изброена като осмата водеща причина за DALY [18]. Шизофренията е на трето място по инвалидизация, намалена продължителност на живот (10–12 години), главно поради по-честите соматични заболявания и твърде честите самоубийства. Социалната цена на боледуването е огромна, а в някои аспекти, като загуби от нереализирана работоспособност и бреме за близките е трудно измерима. Въпреки провеждането на антипсихотично лечение, болните от шизофрения имат лоша прогноза по отношение на социалното и професионално функциониране, социален живот, и качество на живот. Наред с високо ниво на инвалидност (около 40%) 20-30% от пациентите с адекватна терапия достигат до ниво на социално възстановяване или ремисия с минимални симптоми [2]. Епидемиологичните проучвания показват, че в сравнение с други психотични разстройства, лошото психосоциално функциониране е най-често при болни от шизофрения [15]. Най-ранната и устойчива последица при шизофрения е влошаването на функционирането в обществото. Изразената социална дезадаптация, обхваща повечето сфери на живота и се открива при 56% от пациентите, страдащи от шизофрения [3].

Когнитивните функции са необходими за правилното функциониране на хората в социума. В мета-анализ Ventura J. et al. [19] показват, че социално-профессионалният спад при пациенти с шизофрения се дължи най-вече на основните когнитивни дефицити. Нивото на разстройството в социалната адаптация варира от леко до много тежко.