

S26 *Stereotypes towards neuroleptics and compliance*

## ABSTRACT

"Prejudices of the general public towards neuroleptics".  
(J. Agustín OZAMIZ & Zuriñe SARABIA)

The appropriate use of prescribed neuroleptics -which is of great importance for their effectiveness, depends upon the attitudes towards them to a great extent

On the other hand health authorities are worried about the cost of neuroleptics within the pharmaceutical budgets of the health system. It is very useful to know the attitudes of the general public towards neuroleptics to carry out an adequate survey on the use of neuroleptics.

In the autonomous region of the Basque Country several surveys have been carried out on the matter of attitudes towards psychopharmacons (Guimón & Ozamiz, 1980) and lifestyles and consumption of psychopharmacons (Ozamiz & Etxebarria, 1990), which could be taken into account as reference points to analyse the evolution of social attitudes towards psychotropic drugs and their social representation.

The following survey shows the result of a survey carried out in Bilbao which analyses the attitudes towards the mentally-ill and psychotropic medicines.

It is a comparative study which compares the attitudes among people in Bilbao and the attitudes among people in the Swiss city of Geneva. The evolution of the social attitudes towards neuroleptics along the past 20 years is also analysed.

In Bilbao we used a representative sample of 300 subjects who were all residents of a borough called Santutxu, an area of maximum local heterogeneity.

The instrument that has been used to collect the data is the MP96 form, which was prepared in the *Unité de Recherche Sociologique* in the Psychiatric Clinic in Geneva.

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Public opinion on neuroleptics and the rhetoric of the media

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The few representative surveys conducted earlier showed negative attitudes and negative beliefs towards psychotropic drugs. In 1992 an opinion poll was taken of a representative group of 2,127 adults in Germany to identify factors influencing peoples acceptance or rejection of psychotropic drugs. In addition to their attitudes towards these drugs, their ratings of perceived risks and benefits, they were asked about their attitude towards mental disorders in general, their fundamental value orientation and their recollections of reports about these topics in the mass media. Our data proved that knowledge about the real mental diseases like schizophrenia and their treatment by psychotropic drugs like neuroleptics is rather limited and stereotyped. Even in the case of paranoid schizophrenia about 70 % of the lay public considers psychotherapy the best treatment, only 8 % think neuroleptics to be best. In the case of an extremely aggressive patient physical coercive measures like fixation are preferred to sedation by psychotropic drugs. They are believed to cause severe and intolerable side effects. The cost-benefit effect is considered negatively. An attempt to identify factors influencing these widespread negative attitudes towards psychotropic drugs by regression analysis showed that negatively tainted reports in the mass media are more important than fundamental value orientation.

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## STEREOTYPES TOWARDS NEUROLEPTICS AND COMPLIANCE

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One of the main difficulties we have found in the psychopharmacological treatment of schizophrenia is medication compliance. Only between 40% and 50% of patients take their medication as prescribed. This phenomenon becomes one of the major causes of the high relapse rate in schizophrenia. During the last few years, several studies have been designed to improve medication compliance through programmes which included psychoeducational groups for patients and their close relatives.

A non-randomized pilot study has been completed by the authors comparing the outcome after a follow-up period of 5 years in two samples of patients, one receiving standard neuroleptic treatment (N=40) and the other receiving standard treatment plus participating in psychoeducational groups (N=39).

Using readmission as the outcome variable we found very significant statistical differences between both samples, with patients participating in psychoeducational groups showing lower rates of readmission (0.30 vs 2.32). The influence of other variables such as gender (male vs female) or previous history (first episodes vs non first episodes) was also explored. Interestingly, differences were not found between males and females in terms of readmission rates either globally or separating patients according to personal history or treatment received.

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LES USAGERS DE LA PSYCHIATRIE ET LEURS PROCHES  
FACE AUX NEUROLEPTIQUES

A. Spagnoli

Les patients psychiques reconnaissent le plus souvent que la prise de neuroleptiques permet une stabilisation de leur maladie et facilite leur intégration sociale, même s'il leur arrive de refuser ces médicaments lorsqu'ils sont en crise. Leur ambivalence à l'égard des neuroleptiques est évidemment en relation avec leurs expériences.

Les soignants du secteur psychiatrique ont fréquemment un discours idéologique et réducteur "pour ou contre" les médicaments psychotropes, en fonction des idées qu'ils se font de l'étiologie des troubles psychiatriques. Cette tendance à considérer les neuroleptiques indépendamment de tout projet et de toute relation thérapeutiques peut contribuer à faire des médicaments un enjeu relationnel complexe entre le malade, ses proches et le corps soignant (le neuroleptique devenant punition, bouc-émissaire, gilet de sauvetage, etc.).

Pour les patients psychiques et pour leurs proches il est important que les neuroleptiques soient davantage considérés comme partie intégrante d'un projet thérapeutique négocié entre le soignant, le malade et le proche entouré de ce dernier.

Les psychotropes, leur efficacité, leurs effets secondaires et le degré de compliance des patients s'inscrivent dans le cadre de relations thérapeutiques qui sont, comme toutes les relations humaines, complexes et mouvantes.