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**Empathy and Social Cognition: a Comparison of Schizophrenic Patients and Healthy Controls**

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**INTRODUCTION:**Patients affected by schizophrenia have deficits in social cognition,functioning and in properly interpreting facial expression.These disabilities contribute to global impairment in social and relational skills.Data started being collected in the context of the Italian-Network-of-Research-on-Psychosis,headed by Mario Maj and Silvana Galderisi,in our centre;collection went on also after the conclusion of the national project.

**AIMS:**To compare social inference and facial emotion identification in schizophrenic patients and healthy controls.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS:**We recruited 50 patients with Schizophrenia and 50 healthy controls (HCs) matched for sex,age and level of education.Socio-demographic characteristics were gathered;assessment of both patients and HCs included The Awareness of Social Inference Test (TASIT) and the Facial Emotion Identification Test (FEIT);furthermore patients were assessed with the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) and the Brief Negative Symptom Scale (BNSS).

**RESULTS:**Some differences in socio-demographic variables emerged (patients are more often unemployed and single).Moreover,the preliminary analyses highlight several differences between schizophrenic patients and HCs at TASIT and FEIT:patients performed significantly worse than HCs in both tests,with longer reaction times.

**DISCUSSION:**As expected schizophrenic patients showed social skills deficits and difficulties in identifying facial emotions.Our preliminary results point out disabilities in understanding social messages and interpreting human behaviour;these features underlie poor and limited social relationships proper to schizophrenia.

1Galderisi S et al.The influence of illness-related variables,personal resources and context-related factors on real-life functioning of people with schizophrenia;WorldPsychiatry2014,13(3):275-287

2Mucci A et al.The Specific Level of Functioning Scale:Construct validity,internal consistency and factor structure in a large Italian sample of people with schizophrenia living in the community.Schizophr Res.2014Oct;159(1):144-50