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COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTIONS IN PATIENTS WITH ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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Background and aim: Alcohol dependence is a chronic disease connected with disorders of the brain. The aim of this study was to assess cognitive frontal cortex functions in patients with alcohol dependence after discontinuation of alcohol use and after at least, one year of abstinence.

Methods: 106 patients (28 females, 78 males), aged 26 - 57 (mean $43 \pm 7,5$) years with alcohol dependence were evaluated. In 53 subjects, an assessment was performed seven to ten days after discontinuation of alcohol drinking and in 53 subjects after at least one-year of abstinence. The control group consisted of 53 healthy persons, matched for age, sex and education to patients from the experimental group. The intensity of alcohol addiction was assessed, using SADD and MAST scales. Neuropsychological assessment included frontal tests: Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST), N-back Test, TMT A&B, Stroop Test 1&2 and Verbal Fluency Test (FAS).

Results: Significant disturbances of working memory and executive functions were noted in patients with alcohol dependence (with short-term and long-term abstinence), in comparison to healthy subjects. No significant differences were observed between the patients with short-term and long-term abstinence on the performance on neuropsychological tests, except better results of TMT B, WCST- the percent of non-perseverance errors and WCST - the percent of reactions compliant with logical concept obtained by the patients with long-term abstinence.

Conclusions: The results obtained indicate core and enduring working memory deficits, connected with prefrontal cortex impairment in patients with alcohol addiction, independent from the duration of the abstinence.

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