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The outcome of depression and cancer diseases

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Objective: The purpose of this study is to diagnose MDD and to determine its influence to the prognostic and outcome of cancer diseases.

Material and Methods: The study comprises 30 patients diagnosed with cancer. These patients were admitted in the Hematological Clinic of Arad during May 2006–October 2006 and were evaluated physically, psychiatric and psychological. The psychological evaluation was made with Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAMD) and Global Assessment of Functioning Scale (GAFscore) at admission and after 3 weeks of antidepressant treatment.

The patients were divided into two groups:

- Group A—15 patients diagnosed with MDD, that were undergoing mirtazapine;
- Group B—15 patients that were not treated with antidepressants.

Results: The majority of the patients (n=16) were diagnosed with moderate depressive episode and only 4 patients weren't diagnose with depression. Fatigue was present to all patients included into the study while weight loss and loss of appetite were present to 16 and 12 patients. The evolution of average of HAMD scores was better in group A than in group B (5 vs.1,73). GAF score of 90-81, 80-71, 70-61 point was recorded in a higher percentage in the patients of group A.

Conclusions: Patients with cancer have a high rate of MDD.

MDD is a negative prognostic factor for cancer diseases. It influences and modifies the prognostic of disease.

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A psychodynamic description of a sample of gamblers through Rorschach assessment and correlation with Alexithymia dimension

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Since November 2005 our Institute has been developing a group therapy program for pathological gamblers, alternating a counselling/rehabilitation and a group psychotherapy session each week. For a better understanding of psychodynamic aspects of our patients we have started to assess them through Rorschach test according to Klopfer signing and with TAS-20 (Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Taylor et al., 1990). Preliminary results regarding ten patients have shown the following features: a discrepancy between high ambition and real intellectual skills; a psychic life condition dominated by immature resources and impulses; an inappropriate self-control which is performed through emotional distance and experiences of deep anguish. These features can be indicative of a difficulty in expression of emotions, according to alexithymia construct. Most of the patients were found to have significantly higher levels of alexithymia at Tas-20. This outcome is in accordance with previous works on the topic.

Our preliminary observations suggest to focus group therapy not only on communication contents, but also on the communication style of the patient. These results also suggest that could be important to

help patient to recognize and discriminate emotional conditions to prevent relapses due to out of control or repressed emotions.

[1]. Parker J.D., Wood L.M., Bond B.J., Shaughnessy P. (2005) Alexithymia in young adulthood: a risk factor for pathological gambling. *Psychother. Psychosom.* 74(1): 51-5.

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Depression, dissociation and painful physical symptoms

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Background and Aims: Recent findings in cognitive neuroscience indicate that activation of anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) is related to detecting cognitive conflict, dissociation and pain. Conflict related and pain experience induced ACC activation elicits responses in central autonomic network which can be assessed by psychophysiological measures such as heart rate variability (i.e. beat to beat R-R intervals- RRI). Recent findings in neuroscience also suggest that cognitive conflict is related to specific nonlinear chaotic changes of the signal generated by the neural systems.

Method: The present study used Stroop word-colour test as an experimental approach to the study of cognitive conflict in connection with RRI measurement, psychometric measurement of dissociation (DES), somatoform dissociation (SDQ-20), and calculation of largest Lyapunov exponents in nonlinear data analysis of RRI time series in 45 patients with unipolar depression (i.e. depressive period or recurrent depression).

Result: Significant correlation 0.57 ($p < 0.01$) between largest Lyapunov exponents and DES, and 0.45 ($p < 0.01$) between largest Lyapunov exponents and SDQ-20 found in this study indicate that cognitive conflict related defect of neural inhibition during conflicting Stroop task is closely related to dissociative processes and depression.

Conclusion: These findings suggest the hypothesis that specific nonlinear dynamics governs the brain processes that link psychological pain related to dissociation and somatoform dissociation related to painful physical symptoms as a consequence of ACC activation.

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Differential effects of Venlafaxine compared to selective Serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) in the treatment of MDD according to baseline severity

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Objectives: Prior meta-analyses have suggested superior efficacy of venlafaxine compared to SSRIs. In this meta-analysis we compared the efficacy of venlafaxine and SSRIs in patients with MDD classified according to baseline severity

Methods: Data from 31 venlafaxine studies were pooled and remission rates defined as < 8 on the HAM-D17- score were analyzed. Subjects were divided into two groups based on their baseline HAM-D-17 total score ≥ 30 / < 30 . Fisher's exact test was used to compare the treatment effects on the remission rates for each subgroup. All of the analyses were based on intent-to-treat patients, LOCF and completer analysis were performed using standardized measurements.

Results: 5836 patients with a baseline HAM-D17 < 30 could be identified. The LOCF analysis revealed, that the OR is 1.31 (95%CI 1.18, 1.46), $p < 0.001$ and the NNT is 16, whereas the completer analysis revealed, that the OR is 1.25 (95%CI 1.09, 1.43),