

Comorbidity of Schizophrenia and Social Phobia

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Introduction: The most common comorbid disorder in schizophrenic patients is social phobia. It is usually unrecognized problem that may be associated with a high distortion in managing claims of life. The aim of our study was to determine the extent to which comorbid social phobia affects the severity and course of schizophrenia.

Method: The publications were identified in the database Medline and Web of Science using the key words 'schizophrenia comorbidity' in combination with the terms "social phobia" or "social anxiety disorder". Other relevant sources of information were obtained from the cited works by important articles.

Results: The current state of research shows that comorbidity with social phobia is more common in schizophrenia than in the general population. The incidence of comorbid social phobia in psychotic disease states in range from 11 % to 36 %. Social phobia in psychotic patients remains largely unrecognized. If it is undetected and untreated, this comorbidity is associated with more severe psychotic symptoms, worse quality of life and lower self-esteem. It is another obstacle for patients suffering from schizophrenia that deteriorates functioning in everyday life. It also increases the tendency to social isolation and overall worsens social adaptation. Patients with comorbid social phobia and schizophrenia have a higher amount of lifetime suicide attempts, of which they select the ways of suicide with higher lethality and often abuse alcohol or addictive substance.

Conclusion: Patients suffering from both schizophrenia and social phobia have a lower quality of life, impaired functioning in life, a higher incidence of suicide attempts and increased risk of relapse of psychosis compared with those who do not suffer from comorbid social phobia. It is therefore necessary that physicians treating the patients with schizophrenia had in mind the possibility of presence of comorbid social phobia and in case of its occurrence they also treat it.