

The accurate identification of accelerated, agitated and anxious states is of paramount relevance for the correct diagnosis and the selection of a suitable psychopharmacological treatment. Choosing antidepressants, antipsychotics and/or mood stabilizers is presently contingent to the identification of specific phenotypic profiles in anxiety disorders, mixed and manic episodes and/or delirium states. Today, the anamnesis and psychopathological examination are hindered by the vagueness of the conceptualization of these experiences in diagnostic textbooks. We propose a selective review of literature of how these have been conceptualised aiming at increasing the segregation of specific phenomenological profiles across these phenomena.

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Phenomenology of emotions

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This symposium analyses the psychopathological phenomenon “anxiety”, a classical concept, which has returned to be central in the recent psychiatric debate. Some of the most important international phenomenologists will discuss anxiety in the context of major psychopathological areas. Clinical and research insight will be presented in the context of a philosophically deep understanding of the fundamental qualitative features of the psychopathology of anxiety.

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Physical activity for people with psychotic disorders: Realities and prospects

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Studies on PA in schizophrenia: What did we learn? What is effective?

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Schizophrenia is frequently associated with abnormal physical activity (PA) per se (e.g., hypokinesia, motor retardation, etc.) or related to antipsychotic medications (e.g., extrapyramidal symptoms including bradykinesia, tremor, etc.). Daily amounts of PA for subjects diagnosed with schizophrenia tend to decrease over the illness course and contribute to metabolic and cognitive disturbances. PA intervention for schizophrenia patients may result in increased well-being, improved cognitive functioning, fewer negative symptoms and increased self-efficacy, leading to improved management of psychosocial life domains. However, PA trials conducted among people suffering from schizophrenia show several methodological limits: small sample sizes, lack of randomized patients’ allocation, heterogeneity of interventions and inappropriate outcome measures.

Firth et al. (2015) have recently conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 11 trials on structured PA in schizophrenia ($n = 659$, median age of 33 years). The conclusions of this recent review are the following:

- aerobic exercise (for instance exercise bike) of moderate-to-vigorous intensity done at least 90 minutes per week is effective in improving cardiovascular fitness; studies ($n = 7$) using VO_{2max} as an assessment of fitness have reported clinically significant increases in VO_{2max} , “defined as sufficient to reduce cardiovascular disease risk by 15% and mortality by 20%”;
- several low-dose aerobic interventions did not show any effect;
- there was a “strong effect of exercise on total psychiatric symptoms” (both positive and negative symptoms were reduced);
- total attrition rate was 32%. Group exercise showed a much lower attrition rate than solitary exercise;
- caregivers’ supervision increased compliance as compared to unsupervised intervention;
- in the only study that compared per-protocol and intention-to-treat analysis, a significant improvement in fitness, psychiatric symptoms and overall functioning only occurred in participants who attended > 50% of exercise sessions.

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Clinical and neurobiological effects of aerobic endurance training in multi-episode schizophrenia patients

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Schizophrenia is a severe brain disorder characterised by positive, negative, affective and cognitive symptoms and can be viewed as a disorder of impaired neural plasticity. Aerobic exercise has a profound impact on the plasticity of the brain of both rodents and humans such as inducing the proliferation and differentiation of neural progenitor cells of the hippocampus in mice and rats. Aerobic exercise enhances LTP and leads to a better performance in hippocampus related memory tasks, eventually by increasing metabolic and synaptic plasticity related proteins in the hippocampus. In healthy humans, regular aerobic exercise increases hippocampal volume and seems to diminish processes of ageing like brain atrophy and cognitive decline.

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Feasibility and effectiveness of aerobic exercise training interventions in schizophrenia

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Patients with schizophrenia might benefit from exercise via multiple ways. It can be assumed that positive effects observed in healthy people counteract different pathological dimensions of