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Persistent Auditory Hallucinations in a Sample of Schizophrenic Outpatients

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Introduction: About a third of patients with schizophrenia have persistent auditory verbal hallucinations resulting in persistent distress, functional disability, and frequent loss of behavioral control.

Objectives: To estimate the prevalence of persistent auditory hallucinations in a sample of schizophrenic patients, to specify their characteristics and to identify their clinical associated factors.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study carried-on 144 out-patients (101 men and 43 women, mean age 38.24 ± 10.58 years) followed for schizophrenia in the psychiatry department of the university hospital of Monastir. The assessment was consisted by the collect of epidemiological, clinical and therapeutic data and the use of the Hoffman's auditory hallucinations rating scale (AHRS), and the positive and negative symptoms scale (PANSS).

Results: The prevalence of persistent auditory hallucinations (score of the AHRS ≥ 5) was 40.3%. The total mean score on the AHRS was 10.7 ± 7.8 for all patients and 19.4 ± 7.7 for patients with persistent auditory hallucinations. The items of the AHRS with higher sub scores were the number, the influence and the reality of the voices. The clinical associated factors with persistent auditory hallucinations after multivariate analysis were the family history of physical illness, the absence of tobacco consumption, the hallucinatory onset of disorders, the notion of prior hospitalization and continuous course.

Conclusion: Our results support the multidimensional nature of auditory hallucinations and confirm the existence of interindividual differences in these hallucinations. Persistent auditory hallucinations were associated with poor prognosis, requiring more effective therapeutic strategies.