
ANHEDONIA AND REAL-LIFE MOTIVATION IN PATIENTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

M. Chieffi¹, G. Piegari¹, A. Mucci¹, F. De Riso¹, S. De Simone¹, E. Plaitano¹, A. Nardi¹, S. Galderisi¹

¹Department of Psychiatry, University of Naples SUN, Naples, Italy

Introduction. Anhedonia has been regarded as a core deficit of schizophrenia and has been assigned a central role in the pathogenetic models of the syndrome as well as in the disability associated to it. Current research suggests that schizophrenia patients do not have a deficit in hedonic experience but, instead, a reduced ability to anticipate reward that might underlie other aspects of schizophrenia, such as avolition and lack of initiative.

Aims. The present study was aimed at characterizing these aspects in a sample of 35 patients with schizophrenia stabilized on second generation antipsychotics by comparing them to a group of 26 healthy controls (HC).

Methods. In both patients and HC, instruments specifically designed to assess the experience of consummatory and anticipatory pleasure as well as trait social and physical anhedonia were used; the factor 'real-life motivation' was extracted by the Quality of Life Scale.

Results. Patients showed, with respect to HC, higher trait social anhedonia, as well as reduced real-life motivation, but similar scores for trait physical anhedonia and the experience of consummatory or anticipatory pleasure.

Conclusions. In our sample of patients with schizophrenia the preserved experience of both consummatory and anticipatory pleasure in the presence of a significant deficit of motivation suggests a poor ability to translate pleasurable experiences into motivational states.

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