INTRODUCTION

Theory of mind (ToM) is an important area of social cognition. ToM is defined as the ability to infer one’s or other person’s mental states such as intents, beliefs and emotions to be able to understand and foresee behaviours. Patients with chronic or first-episode schizophrenia are known to have theory of mind impairments (ToM) [1]. ToM is not a homogeneous construct, but it has an affective component (i.e. inferring other’s feelings) and a cognitive component (i.e. inferring other’s beliefs and motivations) [2]. The impaired functionality observed in subjects with schizophrenia has been associated with ToM impairments. However, this association is based on the cognitive area rather than on the affective area of the construct [3].

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the affective dimension of ToM and functionality in a sample of outpatients with schizophrenia.

METHODS

A total of 44 outpatients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia (DSM-5 criteria) aged 18-65 years were included in the study.

The affective component of ToM was assessed using the revised version of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (REMET). ToM skills are addressed in this test by asking subjects to identify complex feelings and states of minds and match them with the expression in the eyes of a picture.

Functionality was assessed using the Personal and Social Functionality scale (PSP). This scale measures patients’ functionality the last month in four primary areas: self-care, routine work tasks, interpersonal relationships and disturbing behaviours.

The data obtained were analyzed using the SPSS 20.0 statistical package. All hypothesis testing was two-tailed. A level of confidence > 95% was considered statistically significant. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation between REMET and PSP. A linear regression model was constructed using REMET as the dependent variable and PSP as a potential predictor.

Informed consent was obtained from all patients according to the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AGE (mean)</th>
<th>DURATION OF THE DISEASE (mean)</th>
<th>DURATION OF FORMAL EDUCATION (mean)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS</td>
<td>Male: 79.5% Female: 20.5%</td>
<td>46.1 years (SD= 9.44)</td>
<td>24.24 years (SD= 9.28)</td>
<td>8.66 years (SD= 2.09).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

A strong, direct, linear correlation (r = 0.717; p<0.001) was observed between REMET and PSP scores. Scores on the Eyes Test would account for 51% of variability in PSP scores (β1 = 1.30; CI 95% 0.91 - 1.69).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REMET</th>
<th>β1</th>
<th>I.C.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>(0.91, 1.69)</td>
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CONCLUSIONS

The data obtained in this study reveal the existence of a strong correlation between the affective area of Theory of mind and functionality in patients with schizophrenia, which is consistent with the findings of previous research on the cognitive area of Theory of mind. More research should be conducted in the future to further investigate this correlation.

REFERENCES


No potential conflict of interest