

Generalized anxiety, panic and phobic symptoms in schizophrenia

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Background: Though anxiety symptoms in Schizophrenia was described as early as in 1949, when "Pseudoneurotic schizophrenia" was described (Hoch & Polatin, 1949), but later adequate studies were not done on this area. In 1980s, with successful use of benzodiazepines for panic or anxiety symptom in schizophrenia, interest started growing and subsequently studies have been done. Significant studies on this topic were done by Argyl (1990), Cutler and Siris (1991) Emsley et al (1999), Labbate et al(1999), Dixon et al (2001), Goodwin et al (2001) and Craig et al (2002). Till the time of this study, there was no Indian study on this area.

Objectives:

The study was done to determine the prevalence of generalized anxiety, panic and phobic symptoms and disorders in schizophrenia and distribution of these symptoms in schizophrenia patients and to compare the sociodemographic and clinical variables between schizophrenia patients with and without anxiety.

Methodology:

The study was done in the outpatients attending the OPD of Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, India. Co-operative patients aged 18 to 50 yrs with a diagnosis of schizophrenia according to ICD-10 DCR criteria and who were either psychotropic drug naive or drug free for 4 weeks (12 weeks for depot antipsychotics) were included in the study. Patients with comorbid significant medical illness, substance dependence, mental retardation or depression were excluded from the study. Patients were assessed on a semi-structured socio-demographic and clinical data sheet, Schedule for Affective Disorder and Schizophrenia – Lifetime Version (SADS-L) (Endicott & Spitzer, 1978; Endicott & Spitzer, 1979), Brief Psychiatry Rating Scale (BPRS) (Overall & Gorham, 1962; Overall,1983) and Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) (Hamilton, 1959). Patients were selected by multistage alternate interval sampling, taking first three patients of schizophrenia attending the OPD and meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria on alternate days in each week

The data collected were statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10.0

Results:

Table 1

Prevalence of Generalized Anxiety, Panic and Phobic symptoms / disorder in Schizophrenic population

N=60		
Comorbid Anxiety symptom / Disorder	n	%
Panic Attacks	11	18.33
Panic Disorder	6	10
Generalized anxiety symptoms	10	16.66
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	6	10
Social phobia	1	1.7
Agoraphobia	2	3.3

Table 1 shows the prevalence of generalized anxiety, panic or phobic symptoms or disorders in Schizophrenic patients

References:

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Table 2:

Comparison of clinical variables of Schizophrenic patients without anxiety symptoms (N=39) and with anxiety symptoms (N=21)

Variables	Schizophrenia without anxiety symptoms (N=39)	Schizophrenia with anxiety symptoms (N=21)	t / χ^2	p
	Mean \pm SD / n (%)	Mean \pm SD / n (%)		
Duration of illness (months)	54.51 \pm 48.49	56.76 \pm 50.47	-0.169	0.412
Age of onset (yrs)	26.58 \pm 7.37	26.09 \pm 8.79	0.231	0.818
Mode of onset				
Acute	11(28.2)	8(38.1)	0.617	0.432
Insidious	28 (71.8)	13(61.9)		
Precipitating factor				
Present	3 (7.7)	5 (23.8)	3.068	0.08
Absent	36 (92.3)	16 (76.2)		
Past History				
Present	10 (25.6)	3 (14.3)	1.037	0.309
Absent	29 (74.4)	18 (85.7)		
Family History				
Absent	31 (79.5)	9 (42.9)	8.242	0.016
Nonaffective psychosis	6(15.4)	9(42.9)		
Affective psychosis	2(5.1)	3(14.3)		
Premorbid personality				
Premorbid disorder absent	36 (92.3)	19 (90.5)	0.06	0.807
Premorbid disorder present	3(7.7)	2(9.5)		
Course				
Continuous	27(69.2)	17(81)	4.875	0.087
Episodic Remittent	10 (25.6)	1 (4.8)		
Episodic with stable deficit	2(5.1)	3(14.3)		
Diagnosis				
Paranoid	25 (64.1)	14 (66.7)		
Schizophrenia			0.039	0.843
Undifferentiated				
Schizophrenia	14 (35.9)	7 (33.3)		

Table 2 shows the comparison of clinical variables between schizophrenic patients without anxiety symptom and schizophrenic patients with anxiety symptoms. Significant group difference (P<0.05) was present only regarding presence or absence of family history of psychosis. Anxiety symptoms were commoner in patients who had a family history of psychosis.

Conclusion:

The study concluded that the rate of panic attacks and panic disorder and generalized anxiety symptoms and generalized anxiety disorder was more common among schizophrenia patients than general population though the same was not true for phobic disorders. Moreover, anxiety symptoms were commoner in patients with family history of psychosis.