

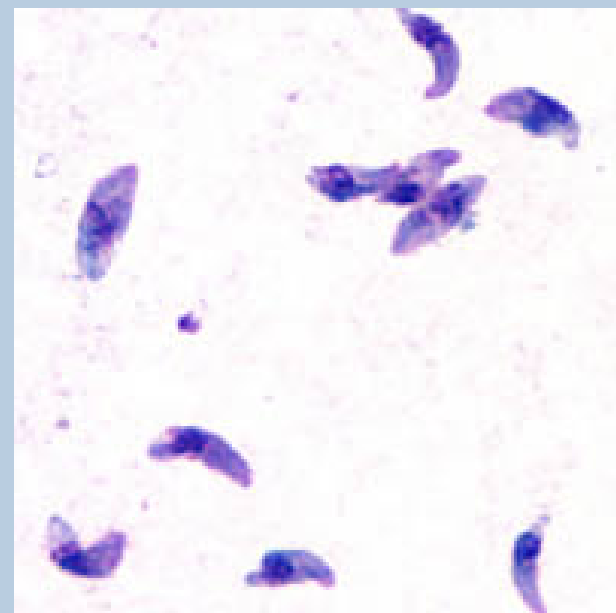
Impact of Exposure to Cats During Childhood on Clinical Features in Schizophrenia

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Introduction: Exposure to cats has largely been studied as an etiological factor of schizophrenia, and more specifically as a factor of transmission of toxoplasma infection (1, 2).

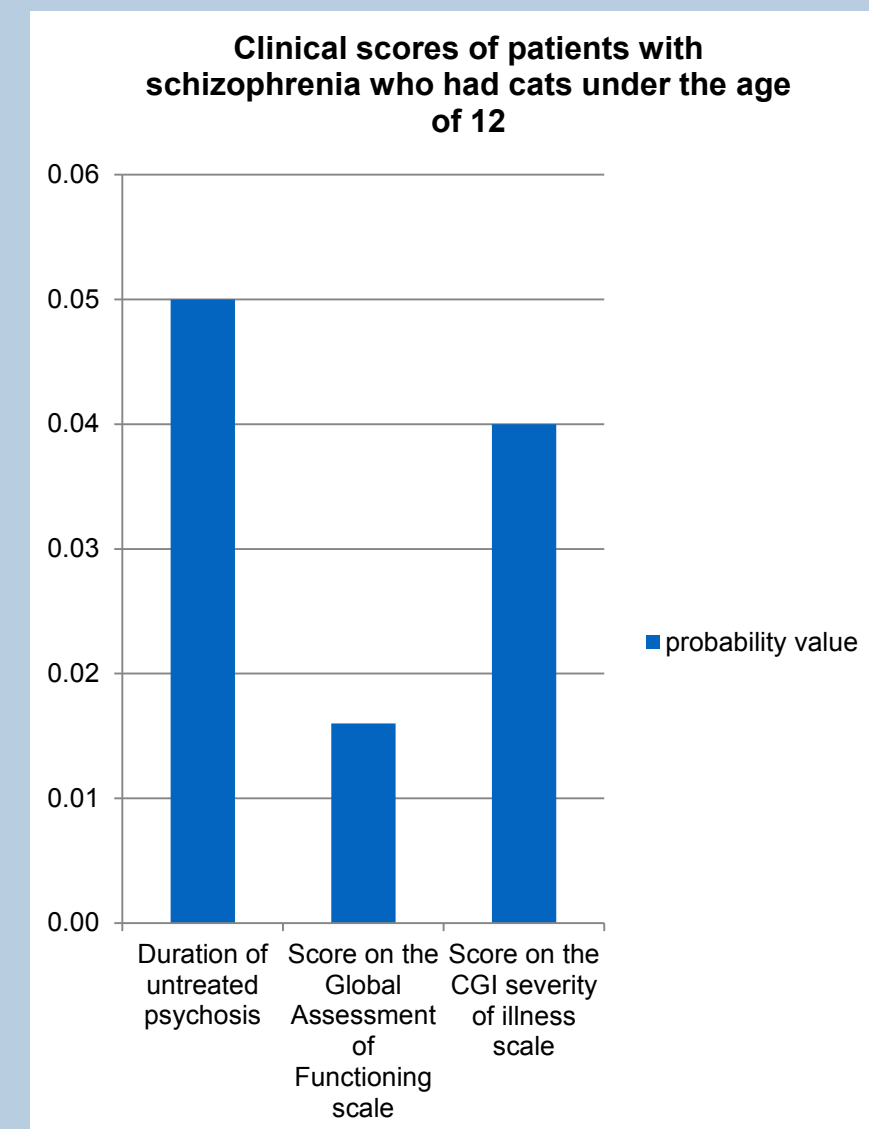
However, its impact on schizophrenia has not been sufficiently explored.

This study is meant to investigate the effect of early exposure to cats on the symptoms of the disease.



Method: In a cross-sectional study of 100 patients with schizophrenia, a clinical assessment was conducted, using the PANSS, Calgary, Clinical Global Impression and Global Assessment of functioning scales. Patients were divided into two groups: the first group is composed of 55 patients who had a cat before the age of 12 and the second group is composed of 45 patients who did not have a cat. A comparison study has been made between the two groups.

Results: When comparing the results, the first group had a longer duration of untreated psychosis ($p=0.05$), a higher score on the Global Assessment of Functioning scale ($p=0.016$) and a lower score on the Clinical Global Impression severity of illness scale ($p=0.04$) compared to the second group.



Discussion: As mentioned earlier, only etiological relationship (1, 2) was found between exposure to cats and schizophrenia disease through toxoplasma infection .

In our study, we found a strong correlation on the protective effect of cats on patients with severe forms of schizophrenia

This was illustrated by better scores in the Global Assessment of Functioning scale and in the Clinical Global Impression severity of illness scale.

Conclusion: The results of this study showed that patients with schizophrenia who owned cats before the age of 12 have an attenuated clinical severity of the illness and a better social adaptation as shown by the Global Assessment of Functioning scale and the Clinical Global Impression severity of illness scale. Further controlled studies are needed for confirmation and for more accurate definition of the complex link between schizophrenia and exposure to cats at an early age. This could potentially benefit research on Ultra High Risk patients.



References:

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