

## **P-1312 - DOES THE INTERNET OFFER SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA? A CROSS-SECTIONAL PILOT STUDY**

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**Introduction:** Individuals with schizophrenia suffer from deficits in social skills, lack of motivation and social rejection. Web-browsing seems to create opportunities to forge social ties, bypassing traditional social skills and rejection.

**Objective:** Assessing web-browsing habits and web based social interaction among individuals with schizophrenia.

**Aims:**

- 1) Comparison of internet use for virtual relationships among patients suffering from psychotic spectrum disorders, non-psychotic patients and healthy subjects.
- 2) Examining correlation between creating virtual relationships and real-life social interactions among these groups.

**Methods:** The web-browsing habits, social skills and demographic data of 143 patients suffering from Psychotic spectrum disorders were evaluated via the use of self-administered questionnaires, clinical data and information from their computerized medical files. As control groups, similar data were collected from a group of Non-psychotic patients (n=118) and healthy volunteers (n=100).

**Results:** When controlling the demographic data for the three groups, no difference was found in the extent of creating virtual and real-life social interactions via internet use. A trend association could be seen between the Psychotic group and creating virtual relationships. All groups exhibited significant correlations between creating virtual and real-life relationships through the internet. However, the Psychotic group exhibited a higher correlation ( $r = .76; p < 0.01$ ) than the Non-psychotic group ( $r = .52; p < 0.01$ ) and the Control group ( $r = .32; p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions:** This study provides preliminary data regarding internet use for social interaction among individuals with schizophrenia. Our results suggest that these individuals do benefit from internet use, as it seems to enhance their social abilities.