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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PSYCHIATRY: A REVIEW

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Background: Emotional intelligence is a term coined by Salovey & Mayer and is defined by these authors as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to perceive and identify emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to improve cognitive processes, and manage one's and others' emotions. There are also mixed models of emotional intelligence that imply a broader concept of intelligence, including mental abilities and personality characteristics.

Aim: To discuss the relevance of emotional intelligence in Psychiatry. To review recent studies of emotional intelligence in psychiatric disorders.

Methods: Review of the literature. MEDLINE and PubMed databases searches for peer-reviewed studies, published between 2000 and 2010, using combinations of the Medline Subject Heading terms emotional intelligence, trait emotional intelligence, ability emotional intelligence and psychiatry, mental disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, social phobia, eating disorders.

Results: There are few studies in the literature addressing this topic. Emotional intelligence is a complex concept, with different theories defending distinct conceptualizations. The studies reviewed showed lower levels of emotional intelligence across different psychiatric disorders.

Conclusions: The field of affective neuroscience is of major importance in Psychiatry and has added important clues to the understanding of psychopathology. Although emotional intelligence is a recent and understudied topic in Psychiatry it can help to understand mental disorders and bring new insights to the comprehension of psychopathology.