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THE ROLE OF COGNITION IN VOCATIONAL FUNCTIONING OF SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS

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Background: Unemployment is a factor that negatively affects the health of the entire population and is an important cause of exclusion, affecting persons with severe mental health problems. The rise of unemployment rates for these persons contrasts with the dropping of unemployment rate for the general population. Schizophrenia is associated with long-term unemployment. Cognitive dysfunction, rather than clinical symptoms, may be the most important factor in the ability to work for patients with this disorder.

Aims: This study aims to evaluate the relationship between clinical symptoms, cognitive functioning and employment status in patients with schizophrenia.

Methods: 40 patients with schizophrenia were evaluated with PANSS, CANTAB (Cambridge Neuropsychological Test Automated Battery) and with an interview regarding work experience.

Results: The results suggest that poor premorbid function, negative symptoms and cognitive dysfunction are significantly associated with unemployment in schizophrenia.

Conclusions: The results of this study confirm the importance of cognitive functioning as a predictor of work function in patients with schizophrenia and the need of cognitive rehabilitation programs.