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SEXUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA: PRELIMINARY RESULTS IN A PORTUGUESE SAMPLE

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Introduction: Sexuality is an important dimension of life. To promote the well-being and quality of life of people with Schizophrenia, they must experience their sexuality in healthy ways. However, the lack of studies about this topic makes difficult to develop interventions in this area.

Aims: Understand the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes related with sexuality of schizophrenic individuals.

Methods: Data were collected using a questionnaire intentionally prepared for this study, with questions related to biologic, emotional and social dimensions of sexuality, evaluating: knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about sexuality; sexual activity; emotional intimacy, friendship and social life. The sample was composed by 35 individuals with Schizophrenia: 83% male and 17% female; mean age 41 years.

Results: The data revealed that 86% of the sample is single and only 6% have an affective relationship. They have difficulties to have friends, to have a satisfactory social life, and only 20% have a job. Despite the correct knowledge about sexuality, they reveal difficulties in fulfilling emotional or intimate relationships, they feel lonely and unsatisfied about their sexual life. They also feel negative effects of anti-psychotic drugs, often neglected by health professionals, views as non-preoccupied with the quality of the sexual life of the patients.

Conclusions: The sample valorized being asked about their sexuality, revealing that this topic is forgot by the professionals. It seems necessary to develop interventions regarding the sexuality of those individuals. Our future research is to ameliorate the questionnaire, preparing it to be useful when professionals discuss sexuality with schizophrenic individuals.