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EFFICACY OF SOCIAL COGNITIVE REMEDIATION IN SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS: A META-ANALYSIS INCLUDING 22 RCTS

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Introduction: Today there is an increased interest from clinicians and researchers in social cognition as a treatment objective for schizophrenia patients.

Objectives: During the last years, several new Social Cognitive Remediation (SCR) approaches were developed. SCR directly intervene in individual or multiple social cognitive domains declared by the NIMH-MATRICES-Initiative. Some of these approaches integrate social cognitive interventions with therapeutic components intended to ameliorate neurocognitive and social skills or with work rehabilitation.

Aims: Until today no quantitative review to evaluate the efficacy of SCR has been presented.

Methods: 22 randomized-controlled trials (RCTs) were identified and included in a meta-analysis. Based on the outcome variables from each study, effect sizes (ES) between SCR and control groups were calculated.

Results: Over an average length of more than 20 weeks a significant global therapy effect of SCR compared to controls was evident (average ES of all conducted variables). Significant effects were found in the proximal outcome addressing social cognition and specifically in the domains of emotional processes, social perception and ToM. Additionally, the neurocognitive area showed significant evidence of amelioration compared with the control groups. More distal effects were found for psychopathology and social functioning. The global therapy effect could be maintained during a mean follow-up period of 10 months. The setting, the type of control groups and the type of intervention in the experimental group were identified as moderators.

Conclusions: The results support strong empirical evidence that SCR has a broad effect on various areas of functioning and symptoms relevant in schizophrenia.