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ANHEDONIA AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

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BACKGROUND

Anhedonia is the loss of subjective ability to experience pleasure. It is considered a key symptom of major depressive episode (DSM-IV-TR). Studies have shown relationship between alexithymia, anhedonia and depression (Prince & al., 1993). Alexithymia is usually defined as difficulty identifying and verbalizing emotions.

OBJECTIVE & HYPOTHESES

In this research, the objective is to propose a dynamic model of cognitive-emotional functioning of anhedonic subjects.

We hypothesize that levels of emotional awareness (Lane & Schwartz, 1991) and social sharing of emotions (Rimé, 2005), emotional components of the concept of alexithymia, are vulnerability factors of anhedonia depressive symptom.

METHODOLOGY

- Sample : 60 W/M (7/53)
M age 43.21 years, SD=11.32
Patients consulting in general practice
- Self-assessment scales:
 - HAD (Zigmond & al., 1983)
 - LEAS (Lane & al., 1990)
 - PSE (Rimé, 1995)
 - AIM (Larsen, 1984)
 - EE (Kring & al., 1994)
- Multivariate analysis of variance

RESULTS

Anhedonia					
Explanatory Var.	β	t	p	R ²	F= 4,154
LEAS	.112	2,591	.0123	.278	p=.002
E Intensity -	.132	1,802	.0771	All these variables explain 28% of the total variance of anhedonia	
E Express.	-.037	-1,260	.2132		
Inhibition PSE	.546	2,104	.0400		
Persistence PSE	-.079	-0,164	.8706		

Emotional Awareness (ability to identify emotions and those of others), Inhibition of Social Sharing (stop talking about her experiences) and Negative Emotional Intensity have a significant influence on anhedonia. The effects of these three variables suggests that they are factors keeping this symptom. Conversely, Emotional Expressivity (externalize their emotions through various channels of expression) and verbal emotional sharing are protective factors.

CONCLUSION

Most studies describe alexithymia as an emotional déficit, risk factor for psychiatric disorders (Speranza & al., 2005). In subjects of our study, is the lack of verbalization of emotions, despite the presence of identification capacity of the subjective experience, which is a vulnerability factor of anhedonia. Consciousness of own emotions and those of others could be seen as « an excess of empathy », an inhibitor of a social emotional regulation.

These data are relevant for therapeutic management of these patients.