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STUDY ON THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND LEARNING ABILITY IN FIRST-EPISODE SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS

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Introduction: Cognitive dysfunction was thought to be one of the core features of schizophrenia. And the executive function of the patients was paid more attention by more and more researchers and clinicians.

Objectives: To investigate the executive function and the learning ability of the patients with first-episode schizophrenia, and their relationships with psychiatric symptoms.

Methods: Fifty cases of first-episode schizophrenia patients and fifty age- and gender-matched healthy controls were tested by a computerized version of Tower of London (TOL) test. The scores of the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) in the group of schizophrenia patients were over 60.

Results: The numbers of the correct answer [x_1 : (14.62±4.12), x_2 : (14.80±4.70)] during the first session and the second session of the TOL test of the patients group were significantly lower than that of the control group [x_1 : (17.48±3.79), x_2 : (18.68±3.19)], and the reaction times [t_1 : (9.27±4.37) seconds, t_2 : (9.51±5.58) seconds] of the two sessions of TOL were longer than the control group [t_1 : (7.28±2.04) seconds, t_2 : (6.67±1.51) seconds], $P < 0.01$. For the control group, x_2 was significantly greater than x_1 , and t_2 shorter than t_1 ($P < 0.01$), while for the patients group, there was no difference between the performances of the first session and the second session. The scores of TOL in the schizophrenia patients were correlated with the negative symptom score of PANSS ($P < 0.05$) and were not correlated with the scores of other subscales of PANSS ($P > 0.05$).

Conclusions: The executive function and the learning ability of schizophrenia are impaired and the cognitive dysfunction is correlated with negative symptoms.