

A follow up study of cognitive functions during depressive episodes

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Aim of the work: to evaluate objectively the profile of cognitive deficits associated with depression as well as to identify if these cognitive deficits represent an important and reliable marker which might have a role in assessment of the degree of severity, the prognosis and the choice of the therapeutic modality. **Patients and Method:** 30 major depressive episode patients diagnosed according to DSM IV (unipolar and bipolar) consecutively selected from psychiatric outpatients' clinic in Abasia mental hospital of both sexes (12 males and 18 females) were included in the study. Their ages ranged between 18-45.

All patients were subjected to psychiatric examination using semi structural interview derived from Abasia Mental Hospital sheet as well as full medical examination and Mini Mental State Examination. Psychometric assessment included Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HRSD) and Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST). They were followed up after a month then two months of starting treatment.

Results: In the 1st interview the mean of the total score of HDRS was 29.8 ± 8.06 , while the work and activities was 2.57 ± 0.86 and the mean score of the refutation 1.06 ± 0.97 . At one month follow up there was statistically significant correlation for patients' results on HDRS and depressive symptoms in general and those related to cognitive functions (work and activities and retardation), all improved with therapy. The results of WCST subscales showed marked improvement after treatment in the 2nd and 3rd interview. The improvement in the subscales of perseverate errors, categories completed and conceptual level responses were statistically significant. There were no statistically significant differences between males and the females on WCST performance. The correlation between the extent of cognitive deficits and depression revealed that both preservation and conceptualization deficits have statistically significant positive correlation with depression. **Conclusion:** depressed patients have some sort of cognitive impairments which are of the most important components of depressive symptoms. The study suggested considering these impairments as one of the predictive markers in depression might help to assess the benefit of the current therapeutic drugs or regimen.