

## Before a Diagnosis of Schizophreniform Disorder is Made, All Causes of Secondary Psychosis Should Be Ruled Out

### O Diagnóstico de Perturbação Esquizofreniforme Só Deve Ser Feito após Exclusão de Todas as Causas de Psicose Secundária

**Keywords:** Psychotic Disorders/diagnosis; Schizophrenia  
**Palavras-chave:** Esquizofrenia; Perturbações Psicóticas/diagnóstico

Dear Editor,

We were interested in the article by Teixeira da Cunha *et al* published in your journal, which deals with the analysis of a national database of schizophreniform disorders.<sup>1</sup> We support the authors' efforts, but have a few comments: it would have been very important to have data on the previous or current use of other drugs such as caffeine, alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, etc. They can all promote, mimic or mask schizophrenia-like psychosis over weeks, months or even years. Although past drug use is an important influencing factor considered by the authors of the article, the genetic risk factors for schizophrenia (particularly in the nervous system regions that contribute to both psychosis and addiction) make patients vulnerable to drug use. This vulnerability may occur before the onset of psychotic symptoms, and increased substance use during adolescence may be associated with an increased risk for both the development of a substance use disorder and the onset of schizophrenia-like syndromes.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, no additional studies were mentioned. More than half (58.3%) of the patients included in the study

were older than 30 years, which may be associated with an increased risk of organic psychosis. How many of these patients underwent brain imaging to rule out cerebral disease? How many had an electroencephalogram to rule out epilepsy? How many had a lumbar puncture to rule out encephalitis? Only patients with negative results should have been included in the cited study. We agree that schizophreniform disorder may precede a diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective psychosis, but this is only true if all organic causes of psychosis have been ruled out. No patient should be diagnosed with primary/idiopathic psychosis without a comprehensive investigation to rule out secondary/organic psychosis.<sup>3</sup> Exclusion of secondary schizophrenia is required, so remember the concept of pseudo-schizophrenia!<sup>4</sup> And please never forget: schizophrenia is one of the most frequently imitated syndromes of medicine.<sup>5</sup>

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JGM: Conceptualization, writing of the manuscript.

JF: Supervision, critical review of the manuscript.

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#### COMPETING INTERESTS

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