

*Pragmatic abilities across symptoms dimensions in schizophrenia*

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SUMMARY

Language and communication dysfunctions have been widely reported among patients with schizophrenia and they may contribute to the social disability that characterizes the illness. Recent research pointed out different impairments at the pragmatic level, i.e., in the ability to match language and context. However, the evidence is still sparse. We aimed at providing a global pragmatic profile by using a newly developed protocol (Assessment of Pragmatic Abilities and Cognitive Substrates, APACS), tested on a sample of 39 patients with schizophrenia and 32 healthy controls. Patients performed significantly worse than controls on all pragmatic tasks included in the APACS test. While no significant correlations were observed between global psychopathological measures and pragmatic performance, significance was reached with specific items of the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale. These findings suggest the presence of a diffuse pragmatic impairment in schizophrenia, not directly related to the global symptoms dimensions, but rather intertwined with specific clinical manifestations across positive and negative symptoms. The relevance of targeting pragmatic abilities for treatment purposes is discussed.