

Poster Exhibition (abstracts)

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Cannabis induces cognitive changes in schizophrenic patients and in controls

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Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug among schizophrenic patients and among the general population. The long-term effects of cannabis on cognitive function are well known. Since 60-80 % of schizophrenic patients exhibit deficits in cognitive function, those deficits might even be increased by the additional regular use of cannabis . The current investigation aims to analyse the effect of chronic cannabis consumption on cognitive functions among dually diagnosed subjects (n=18), comparing them to schizophrenic patients without persistent cannabis use (n=20), healthy controls (n=21) and otherwise healthy chronic cannabis users (n=19). For the first time areas of verbal and nonverbal thinking, attention, visuomotor coordination, executive functions and memory were examined in a complete four-group design. Variables moderating cognitive functions were broadly considered. Schizophrenic cannabis users showed less pronounced deficits than expected and than the non-cannabis consuming schizophrenic patients. Otherwise healthy chronic cannabis users showed more deficits than healthy controls. In both cannabis using groups the cognitive performance depended on the age at onset of chronic cannabis use.

Key words: schizophrenia - cannabis consumption - cognitive dysfunction - residual effects