

Abstract:

Purpose: To estimate a) the state of the research of violent behavior and victimization of patients suffering with schizophrenia; b) to identify the prevalence of violent behavior and victimization in patients with schizophrenia and to study predictors of violent behavior.

Method: a) detailed analysis of relevant studies in the PubMed database; b) data on violent behavior and victimization in the last six months, physical and sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence, substance abuse and post traumatic stress disorder were gathered in 158 patients with psychotic illness and matched comparison group. Additional information was collected from collateral informants. Several regression analysis was used to identify factors independently associated with recent violent behavior.

Results: a) From relevant studies of patients suffering with schizophrenia 72% (n=176) examined aggressive behavior, 23% (n=55) victimization, and 5% (n=13) both. b) In the sample, the presence of a psychotic disorder was associated with an increased risk of assaults (OR=3.80; 95% CI 2.060-7.014). Additional risk factors in persons with and without psychosis included recent physical victimization (OR=7.09; 95% CI 3.922-12.819), childhood maltreatment (OR=3.15; 95% CI 1.877-5.271), the level of drug use (OR=1.13; 95% CI 1.063-1.197), and the level of alcohol use (OR=1.04; 95% CI 1.000-1.084). Increasing age (OR=0.96; 95% CI 0.942-0.978) and employment (OR=0.30; 95% CI 0.166-0.540) were protective factors. Except for drug use, which appeared to have greater effect on violence in the group without psychosis, there were no major differences between patients and controls in these risk and protective factors.

Conclusions: Most previous studies have analyzed the violent behavior of patients with schizophrenic disease. In the sample, recent victimization was the strongest predictor of violent behavior. Although psychosis per se elevates the risk of violence, other risk and protective factors for violence in persons with psychosis and comparison group are largely similar.

Keywords: schizophrenia; psychosis; violence; victimization; risk