

WORKSHOP ON GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SCHIZOPHRENIA

What we know and what we should know



Tunis, 18th-19th october 2023

Occidental Lac Tunis
Rue du Lac Turkana

Speakers

Sofia Brissos | Lisbon Psychiatric Hospital Centre, Lisbon, Portugal

Davide Cafiero | Helaglobe, Florence, Italy

Laura Castro | Women's Brain Project, Zurigo, Switzerland

Bernardo Dell'Osso | University of Milan, Italy

Luca Fabris | Italian Center for the Studies on Gender Health and Medicine, Padova, Italy

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Abstract

According to the scientific literature, there are relevant differences related to sex and gender in schizophrenia. The incidence of schizophrenia appears to be higher among men compared to women, with a ratio of 1.4:1. Men also tend to experience the onset of schizophrenia 3-4 years earlier than women, and different susceptibilities are observed at different life stages. Among individuals with schizophrenia, males have a greater risk of prominent negative symptoms, while females display more affective symptoms such as depression, impulsivity, emotional instability, sexual misconduct, and sexual delusions.

In terms of cognitive dysfunction, female patients tend to perform better on measures of executive function, verbal memory, and information processing speed compared to male patients.

On the other hand, male patients generally outperform females in terms of visual memory and attention. However, it is important to note that:

1. Sex differences in schizophrenia are recognized in clinical practice, but they are still poorly understood phenomena.
2. Differences in the efficacy and safety of therapies for schizophrenia in relation to sex and gender are not well-known, which can impact the appropriateness of treatment.
3. The specific pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics differences between sexes are not known, but there are currently no established gender-specific dosing recommendations. This lack of knowledge poses a significant risk of either overmedicating or undermedicating individuals.
4. The impact of female hormonal phases on schizophrenia treatment is not clear, and its effect on the predictability of treatment outcomes is unknown. Additionally, societal prejudices against individuals with mental illness may have a more significant impact on female patients with schizophrenia.

Given the complexity of these factors, it is important for healthcare professionals and researchers to further investigate and understand the sex and gender differences in schizophrenia. This will aid in the development of tailored treatment approaches that consider the unique needs of each individual, taking into account both biological and psychosocial factors. How can we identify specific treatments or solutions for these individuals?

Program

Wednesday 18th October

Session 1 GENDER-DRIVEN APPROACH TO SCHIZOPHRENIA: DO WE NEED IT? WHAT IS STILL MISSING?

- 14:00-14:30 Welcome and introduction to the scope of the workshop | [D. Cafiero](#)
- 14:30-15:00 What is gender medicine and why do we urgently need a gender approach
[L. Fabris](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 15:00-15:30 From gender differences to personalized treatment in schizophrenia
[A. Fagiolini](#)

Session 2 SCHIZOPHRENIA AND GENDER IN EVERYDAY LIFE: DISCUSSION ON SELECTED TOPICS

- 15:30-16:30 Topic 1 | Schizophrenia and biological/physiological differences: sex and age
[L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#)
Discussion | [S. Brissos](#), [B. Dell'Osso](#), [L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#), [L. Castro](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 16:30-17:00 Coffee break
- 17:00-18:00 Topic 2 | Schizophrenia and other biological factors: hormones and disability
[S. Brissos](#), [L. Castro](#)
Discussion | [S. Brissos](#), [B. Dell'Osso](#), [L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#), [L. Castro](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 18:00-18:30 Conclusions of the first day and next steps

Thursday 19th October

Session 3 DEEP DIVE INTO A GENDER-DRIVE APPROACH TO SCHIZOPHRENIA

- 09:00-09:30 Brain health and public perception | [L. Castro](#)
- 09:30-10:30 Topic 3 | Schizophrenia and social constructs: ethnicity, socioeconomic and cultural status and geographic location
[B. Dell'Osso](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
Discussion | [S. Brissos](#), [B. Dell'Osso](#), [L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#), [L. Castro](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00-12:00 Topic 4 | Substance use in schizophrenia and gender
[A. Fagiolini](#), [L. Castro](#)
Discussion | [S. Brissos](#), [B. Dell'Osso](#), [L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#), [L. Castro](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 12:00-12:30 Take home message | [A. Fagiolini](#)
[S. Brissos](#), [B. Dell'Osso](#), [L. Fabris](#), [L. Castro](#), [T. Vavalà](#)
- 12:30-13:00 What's next | [D. Cafiero](#)
- 13:00-13:30 Conclusions | [L. Fabris](#), [A. Fagiolini](#)
- 13:30 End of the workshop

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