Clinical and neuropsychological characteristics of immigrant patients with chronic disease

Angioletti Laura^{1,2}, Balconi Michela^{1,2}, Bossola Maurizio³

¹Research Unit in Affective and Social Neuroscience, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy

²Department of Psychology, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy

³University Hospital Agostino Gemelli, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Rome, Italy

Objectives

We aim to highlight complex psychosocial and neuropsychological needs of immigrants compared to Italian patients with chronic disease.

Background and aims

Recently new pathways have been set up for the care management of patients with chronic disease, living lower health and psycho-social well-being also due to cognitive and emotional deficits associated with the condition of chronicity¹. Particularly at risk are chronic patients with different cultural belongings now stable in Italy, who, in addition, face aspects of vulnerability related to the challenge of integration: linguistic and cultural barriers, socio-juridical difficulties and lower socio-economic status². Thus, this research purpose is to build a new approach for simultaneous and multidimensional evaluation of the neuropsychological and clinical conditions of immigrant patients with chronic disease living in Italy.

Materials and methods

Sixty-four patients with chronic disease conditions (44% Italians; 56% Immigrants) recruited from the Italian healthcare system underwent a battery of psychosocial and neuropsychological tests investigating linguistic abilities, health status, perceived social support and discrimination, socio-economic status, illness comorbidity and, global cognitive functioning.

Results

Findings highlighted that our sample of immigrant chronic patients was younger, with lower scores for scales evaluating basic linguistic abilities, mental health and engagement in social activities, multidimensional social support perceived (specifically, by family) and higher for emotional issues, when compared to Italians patients. In addition, neuropsychological tests underlined cognitive vulnerabilities in abstract non-verbal reasoning for immigrant patients.

Conclusions

Our approach could be included by the Italian healthcare system as screening tool to assess socio-psychological fragility of immigrants' chronic patients and provide *ad hoc* clinical interventions.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

PREVALENT CHRONIC DISEASES

MULTIDIMENSIONAL EVALUATION

NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SCREENING

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS	NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS
Basic global cognitive functioning	Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE)
Short term memory	Serial repetition of bisyllabic words
	Corsi's test
Attention	Stroop test (time, mistakes)
Nonverbal abstract reasoning	Raven Matrices
Verbal linguistic production	Verbal fluence
PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSIONS	PSYCHOSOCIAL SCALES
Italian language comprehension and knowledge	Linguistic test
Health status	Short Form Health Survey (SF-36)
Socioeconomic status	Socio Economic Status scale
Discrimination	Everyday Discrimination Scale
Social support	Multidimensional Social Support
Comorbidity	Cumulative Illness Rating Scale (CIRS)