



Universitatea
Transilvania
din Braşov

HABILITATION THESIS

ABSTRACT

Title: Perception, thinking and behavioural disorders in psychiatric practice – current and prospective therapeutic approaches

Domain: MEDICINE

Author: Assoc. Prof. Andreea TEODORESCU
Transilvania University of Braşov

BRAŞOV, 2024

ABSTRACT

This habilitation thesis “Perception, thinking and behavioural disorders in psychiatric practice – current and prospective therapeutic approaches” represents a summary of my professional, academic and scientific activity in the period that followed the PhD thesis „Cognitive models involved in genesis of persecutory delusions” until present.

The burden of mental disorders continues to increase, with a significant impact on health and major social and economic consequences in all countries of the world. Perceptual disorders, thinking disorders and behavioral disturbance are essential clinical elements in psychiatric pathology. A significant proportion of psychiatric disorders incorporate these symptoms into the clinical picture.

I had a great interest in the study of the process of thinking and my Phd thesis focused on persecutory delusions that are considered to meet the highest frequency in psychiatric pathology. The study of delusion increased in the past twenty years and generated a knowledge base which has improved the medical and the psychological treatment. A major outcome of my research effort was to provide models for developing and maintaining of persecutory delusion.

Starting from this scientific concern for the processes of thinking and perception, as I developed professionally, I continued the researches started during my doctoral studies. In 2016 I began to teach medical students the sciences of behavior, so my interest also focused on the study of human behavior from the perspective of psychiatric pathology.

The clinical activity in a psychiatric emergency department led my research activity in recent years to the development and publication of a number of studies focused on the therapeutic approach in several psychiatric conditions that include in the clinical picture disorders of perception, thinking and behavior.

Thought and perception disorders and behavior functioning significantly affects the overall functioning of the patient and depending on the severity can affect the quality of life of the patient, but also of the family and society. These severe psychiatric symptoms can be found in many psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, personality disorders, cognitive disorders, intellectual disability and substance abuse.

Previous research suggest a high frequency of psychotic symptoms and behavioral disturbance in many psychiatric disorders. It is necessary to approach these

symptoms in such a way that the therapeutic management is adequate and unitary. The key elements in therapeutic management are actually these symptoms that are integrated into various mental disorders.

The target of the treatment is represented by a constellation of symptoms that can often be found in various nosological entities. Perception disorders and thinking disorders can be clinically presented in the form of delusional ideas and hallucinations, symptoms that we generically frame within the psychotic symptoms. They become the target of treatment, not necessarily the psychiatric condition that includes them.

Although indications for the use of antipsychotics are limited to a specific group of diseases, they are frequently used as rescue medication in high-risk or nonresponsive cases. Starting from these considerations, this paper presents a series of researches that highlight the therapeutic approach of perception, thinking and behavior disorders. Behavioral disorders accompany in a significant proportion of cases the perception and thinking disorders. In this way the therapeutic target becomes the symptom, not the condition that includes it.

This paper aims at an integrative approach to perceptual, thinking and behavioral disorders that offers a new perspective, both clinically and therapeutically. I will present the results of several researches that bring into focus both classical and innovative approaches. Scientific and professional achievements brings together research that addresses the treatment of perception, thinking and behavior disorders in psychiatric disorders and presents the results obtained in 3 main directions: therapeutic approach to perception, thinking and behavior disorders in major psychiatric disorders, in pregnancy and postpartum period and therapeutic management of behavioral disorders.

The first area of interest focuses on studying antipsychotic treatment in major psychiatric conditions that include disorders of perception, thinking and behavior, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders.

I will present a series of papers that bring information of novelty regarding the antipsychotic treatment, including in the context of the covid 19 pandemic.

In the second section I will submit to the attention a series of studies on therapeutic approaches to psychotic and behavioral symptoms that occur in pregnancy, but also in the postpartum period. The treatment of psychotic symptoms in pregnancy and in the postpartum period remains controversial, especially due to the lack of clinical

studies, the fears that psychiatrists have about the administration of different molecules.

The studies published in this regard come to clarify the necessity, opportunity and safety of the admission of the antipsychotic treatment to this category of patients, underlining the benefits of treatment in these cases compared to the risks that may arise from the presence, persistence or aggravation of symptoms.

The third main direction of this thesis is represented by the study of behavioral disorders in psychiatric pathology.

In this regard, I have studied the benefits of clozapine treatment in patients with dementia, with intellectual disabilities and in cases of aggressive behaviors refractory to the standard methods.

Future plans are centered on development of research on the first psychotic episode and resistance to treatment and also development of a screening strategy for detection of dementia to provide early therapeutic intervention.

Given the involvement of teaching and academic activity, some of my further actions regard the publication of new books in the field of behavior science.