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First-episode psychosis: an inflammatory state?

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Abstract

In the last decade an increasing body of research has focussed on the potential role of inflammation in the onset of psychiatric **disorders**. Although the association between inflammation and depression appears now widely acknowledged, mixed findings have been reported in **psychosis** leaving the pathophysiological role of inflammation in **psychosis** still unclear. This paper aims to review studies focussing on inflammation in **first-episode psychosis**, in order to avoid the possible confounding effects of the long duration of illness and chronic treatment with psychotropic medications. Increased levels of IL-6, TNF- α and IL-1 β are the most consistent findings from the studies conducted in **first-episode psychosis** patients. Mixed findings on other cytokines could be partly due to the different methodologies of the studies reviewed. The findings on the association between **inflammatory** markers and clinical symptoms and physical health, as well as on the effect of antipsychotic medications on inflammation at the onset of **psychosis** are also reviewed and discussed. The increased inflammation at onset of **psychosis** as well as in other psychiatric conditions, such as depression, suggests the presence of biological abnormalities which play a pathophysiological role across different diagnostic categories. Future research should test if increased inflammation could be used for the development of biomarkers, as well as as a potential therapeutic target for different subsamples of patients independently of their diagnostic category.

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