Popular science summary of the project

This study concerns functioning of people suffering from schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is one of the most severe mental illness. It usually develops at young age, and its chronic course and troublesome symptoms which hinder the normal functioning often lead to prolonged treatment and rehabilitation.

Despite dynamic evolution of pharmacotherapy which recently took place, a large group of patients still suffer from the unpleasant symptoms of schizophrenia, mainly delusions and hallucinations. Positive symptoms of schizophrenia are being constantly researched. Scientists whose work is focused on psychological models of psychotic symptoms pay special attention to the fact that cognitive biases which are often observed in patients suffering from schizophrenia may serve as a releasing or sustaining mechanisms for psychotic symptoms. Studies showed a connection between positive symptoms of schizophrenia and cognitive biases, like attribution errors (blaming others for own failures), rash decision making (jumping to conclusions), and mind theory deficits (difficulties with understanding intentions and emotions of others). Recently researchers focused on a particular cognitive biases that involves false attribution of data sources, also called a source monitoring process. Term source monitoring refers to cognitive processes engaged in source attribution of memories, knowledge and beliefs. In everyday life this ability allows people to distinguish whether certain events really happened, whether they were imagined or whether they were recounted by others. Typical and well documented source monitoring error concerns attribution of one's thoughts to other people. Recent studies showed that people suffering from schizophrenia have trouble with making distinctions between ideas and reality. Distorted source monitoring process may be a cause of interpersonal conflicts or false memories. Still, very little is known about the mechanisms that lead to the formation of problems. So far, it was not determined to what degree neurocognitive deficits regarding attention, memory, and executive functions influence or cause an increase in the number of source monitoring errors and other cognitive distortions. It is also not clear whether difficulties regarding distinctions between imagination and reality are connected with patients' social functioning.

The goal of this research is to find if or in what way cognitive biases are connected with neurocognitive and social functioning of patients diagnosed with schizophrenia. In order to find those answers a specific study was designed. 80 patients suffering from schizophrenia and 80 healthy people will participate in the study. Participants will undergo several tests that evaluate symptoms' intensification, neuropsychological abilities, as well as tasks that measure cognitive distortions, and self-report questionnaires.

Finding a connection between cognitive biases and neurocognitive, and social functioning will help to bridge gaps in knowledge. It may also serve as a basis for new cognitive behavioral therapies aimed at improving source monitoring abilities, and in turn social functioning of people suffering from schizophrenia, and consequently their quality of life.