

Abstract Information

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Participation :	symposium
Title of the Symposium :	Neuroimmune dysfunction and mental health outcomes: advances in immunopsychiatry in Africa
Category :	Student
Thematic Area :	Neuroimmunology, Neuroinflammation, and Neuroinfection
Title :	The utility of neuroinflammatory biomarkers in informing diagnosis and clinical outcomes in people with new-onset psychosis
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Abstract :

Background: Psychotic disorders have a median age of manifestation in early adulthood, and approximately 30% of individuals who receive the diagnosis will have schizophrenia, a progressive condition leading to a significant burden of years lived with disability and a high cost of care. Neuroinflammation is increasingly recognised as one of the mechanisms of schizophrenia. African populations have a high burden of pro-inflammatory conditions, for example, a high burden of infections during pregnancy and also a high prevalence of trauma; these may be linked to neuroinflammation. However, little is known regarding inflammatory markers in persons living with schizophrenia in the African continent. The study aimed to review the current literature on inflammatory markers of schizophrenia in African populations and the utility and practical implications of research on inflammatory markers in the population.

Methods: A literature review of studies conducted in the African setting on inflammatory markers was performed. Based on preliminary findings of an ongoing cohort study of patients with FEP in South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal) as a case study, the utility and practical implications of research on serum and cerebrospinal fluid inflammatory biomarkers in schizophrenia in the African population are described.

Results: XX. The study on biomarkers had many challenges, and these included individual and contextual factors. Individual factors included the fact that biomarkers currently used to date are non-specific and may be raised in a variety of conditions; therefore, association with clinical symptoms was difficult to establish. Contextual factors included financial and human resource limitations and systemic barriers to conducting new research techniques.

Conclusion: Existing data shows that psychosis, particularly schizophrenia, is more than just a psychological condition; more research is needed on African populations to establish specific neuro-inflammatory markers as the first step towards the management of this condition. Additionally, the existing system barriers in the emerging field must be countered to facilitate progress in research.

Key words: Neuroinflammation, Schizophrenia,