Comparing Measures of Negative Symptoms of Schizophrenia in Clinical Trials: The Investigator's View

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ABSTRACT

Thirty nine raters participating in an industry sponsored schizophrenia clinical trial completed a survey ascertaining experience with the scales (1 - no experience to 8 - greater than 5 years experience), critiquing the clarity of the anchor points (0 - very unclear to 5 - very clear), how well each scale measured the concept of negative symptoms (0 - very ineffective to 5 - very effectively) and the rater’s preference among the scales.

METHOD

Thirty nine raters participating in an industry sponsored schizophrenia clinical trial completed a survey ascertaining experience with the scales (1 - no experience to 8 - greater than 5 years experience), critiquing the clarity of the anchor points (0 - very unclear to 5 - very clear), how well each scale measured the concept of negative symptoms (0 - very ineffective to 5 - very effectively) and the rater’s preference among the scales.

BACKGROUND

The Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms (SANS), the Negative Symptom Assessment Scale (NSA-16), and subscales from the Positive and Negative Symptoms Scale (PANSS) vary in length, complexity and the domains of negative symptoms evaluated. All three scales are reliable and valid measures of negative symptoms for clinical trials. However, little recent direct comparative data is available on raters’ views of the three scales.

RESULTS

- Among the 21 raters who used all three scales, there was equal preference among them (33.3%, 33.3% and 33.3%) respectively for PANSS, SANS and NSA-16.
- Only 17.2%, 27.6% and 29.6%, respectively, of the raters felt the PANSS, SANS and NSA-16 were “very effective” in measuring negative symptoms. 3.4%, 0% and 0% respectively of the raters felt the PANSS, SANS and NSA-16 were “very ineffective” in measuring negative symptoms. With respect to their effectiveness in measuring negative symptoms, mean scores for the PANSS, SANS and NSA-16 were 3.66, 3.67 and 3.79, respectively.
- Only a relatively small minority viewed the anchor points of the three scales as “very clear”. Among the raters who had used all three scales were 6.9%, 0% and 0% respectively of the raters felt the PANSS, SANS and NSA-16 anchor points were “very unclear”.

DISCUSSION

In this survey of 39 clinical trials raters, all three scales were judged to be relatively effective in rating negative symptoms, but the PANSS was felt to be significantly less effective in rating negative symptoms than the SANS or NSA-16. There were no significant differences among raters, with respect to their perception of the relative clarity of the anchor points of the three scales. Only a relatively small minority viewed the anchor point of any of the scales as “very clear”.

REFERENCES