

ETHNOPSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY: MARGINALIZATION AND COUNTER MEASURES IN WHITE AND NON-WHITE POPULATIONS

Mario Braakman, MD, MA, PhD
Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

1. Background

Most prescribed psychopharmacological products have been tested in white populations. Non-western populations were marginalized. However thanks to biologically interested cultural psychiatrists a fair amount of data in ethnopsychopharmacology has been collected. In the past, especially in US-based research a lot of studies divided their research subjects in terms of race. In a more western European view, it became clear that this kind of classification was not scientific nor very helpful. We still are in search of aggregating data into ethnic or biologically meaningful categories. Are there ethnic identities in biological research that are clinically useful, however, who are also inclusive?

2. Aims/Objectives/Issues of Focus

To present very shortly the present-day achievements in ethnopsychopharmacology
To discuss present-day conceptions of identities in biological research.

3. Methods/Proposition

Review of the literature with emphasis on pharmacogenetics of drug-metabolizing enzymes en their genes.

4. Results/Potential Outcomes

In the past US studies used race distinctions (Asian American, Hispanic American, Caucasian, Afro-American) that proved scientifically less productive while
Nowadays we witness the birth of new classifications like standardized biogeographic grouping systems for annotating populations in pharmacogenetic research. These are presented in this paper and we focus on the pro's and con's.

5. Discussion/Implications

There is no clear implication yet. This paper invokes a lot of questions. Hopefully, the presented research will eventually lead to a non-racist classification. A classification that is meaningful in a clinical sense, and that should be inclusive. Does a system like that already exist? Should we try to achieve a system like that, or should we divert our attention away from ethnic or cultural groups and focus on individualized personalized medicine?

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe present-day state-of-the-art knowledge in the field of ethnicity and psychopharmacology
2. Critically appraise past, present, and future studies in de field of ethnopsychopharmacology, pharmacogenetics, and related fields.