The initial prodromal symptoms in schizophrenia were studied in 100 DSM diagnosed patients, and 100 controls. The median number of symptoms in the patients and the controls was 8 (range 2-13) and 0 (range 0-5), respectively. Patients developed mainly symptoms indicating social, occupational and affective dysfunction, whereas the controls symptoms with magical content and disturbance in mood. There were significant differences in the frequency of several symptoms appearing in the subtypes. Initial prodromal symptoms were classified into negative, positive-prepsychotic and positive-disorganization. The negative prodromes were significantly more frequent in the disorganized, whereas the positive in the paranoid subtype. Observation of the course of symptoms from the prodromal to the psychotic state revealed that 58% of them showed increased intensity, 21% remained unchanged, 5% decreased, 3% evolved into other affective difficulties, 9% progressed into delusions, 1% into hallucinations and 3% disappeared. The Global Assessment of Functioning Scale showed that functioning is differentially affected among the subtypes already from the prodromal phase. The findings provide a better understanding of the initial prodromal state of schizophrenia, the signs and symptoms that best define it, and their prognostic significance.

**Key words:** first episode, initial prodromal phase, positive-negative dimensions, schizophrenia, subtypes, symptomatology.


