BACKGROUND: The aim of the study was to examine whether the efficacy of psychoeducation in patients with schizophrenia is dependent on their cognitive performance and if a preceding cognitive training can enhance the therapeutic effects of psychoeducation. PATIENTS AND METHODS: A total of 116 inpatients were randomly assigned to either a standardized cognitive training (COGPACK) or to routine occupational therapy, followed by a psychoeducational group program of 8 sessions within 4 weeks for all study patients. The effects of cognitive training and psychoeducation were assessed directly afterwards and in a follow-up after 9 months. RESULTS: The patient knowledge and compliance improved. Neurocognition and especially memory acquisition significantly predicted illness knowledge after psychoeducation, whereas psychopathology did not. No differential effects of the COGPACK training were found. After 9 months 75% of the patients showed a very good compliance and the readmission rate was 18%. The results were comparable under both study conditions. CONCLUSION: Besides baseline illness knowledge neurocognition was the only significant predictor for illness knowledge after psychoeducation. Patients with cognitive deficits can profit from psychoeducation in the long run as well. In future it should be examined whether a modified cognitive training
program could achieve a faster improvement of the illness knowledge.