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Oral Presentation

Social Cognition in Patients with Anxiety Disorders

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Abstract

Social cognition is defined as the capacity to generate, perceive and interpret and responses to the dispositions, intentions and behaviors of other people. It includes different specific cognitive processes that underlie social interactions. Four domains of social cognition are named Theory of Mind (also known as mentalizing), emotion recognition, social perception and attributional style. Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent psychiatric illnesses. In addition to suffering from important psychiatric comorbidity, people with anxiety disorders show markedly functional impairment and poorer quality of life than healthy controls. Social cognition deficits could thus explain part of the functional impairments and poorer quality of life in anxiety disorders. This can be especially true for those anxiety disorders with affected social abilities, such as social phobia (SP), where emotion recognition appears to be disturbed, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which emotional numbing- the core symptom of the illness- is known to impact interpersonal relationships. As SP and PTSD are often reported as particularly socially-impaired anxiety disorders, it is expected that more important social cognition deficits will be found among people with these diagnoses. Therefore, we summarized and quantified available data regarding four domains of social cognition, in people with a diagnosis of anxiety disorder, especially SP and PTSD.

Keywords: Social cognition, Posttraumatic stress disorder, Social phobia, Theory of mind

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