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Social anxiety treatment in substance users

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Background and Aims: Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a disabling condition. Individuals with SAD use behaviours to lessen their fears of negative judgement and danger and manage social situations better. Research suggests that SAD often co-occurs with other psychiatric disorders including substance use disorders. However, individuals are directed to seek treatment for SAD only after they have managed their other comorbid psychiatric problems. They are usually excluded from SAD treatment studies because of the belief that their concurrent disorders are a barrier to SAD treatment. Individuals with SAD may use avoidance strategies including substance use and problematic eating to manage their perception of danger in social situations. This presentation examines the efficacy of a 12-week CBT group modified for the treatment of concurrent SAD and substance use from existing CBT protocols for social anxiety (see Heimberg et al., 1999).

Methods: Participants with a DSM-IV diagnosis of SAD and substance use disorders were administered a series of social phobia, anxiety sensitivity, and expectancies on social evaluative situations pre and post SAD treatment. In addition, they completed weekly avoidance and fear hierarchies of social situations from pre to end of treatment. Treatment involved the identification and challenging of cognitive distortions, behavioural experiments and in vivo exposure.

Results: Multiple comparison analyses suggested that individuals experienced a decrease in fear, avoidance, and physiological symptoms related to social anxiety.

Conclusions: CBT can reduce symptoms of SAD in substance users. Strategies to address substance use and problematic eating while delivering SAD treatment will be also presented.

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Grey matter correlates of cognitive measures of the simulated public speaking test in social anxiety spectrum: a voxel-based study

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Background and Aims: The diagnostic frontiers of social anxiety disorder (SAD) are still controversial, since it could be described as part of a continuum of severity rather than as a disorder based on an arbitrary threshold with qualitative distinctions. The present study aims to investigate possible differences among subjects along the social anxiety spectrum using the Simulated Public Speaking Test (SPST), an experimental model of human anxiety. Afterwards, the anticipatory measures of SPST among groups were correlated with different volume of gray matter areas by MRI using the voxel-based morphometry method.

Methods: We evaluated patients with generalized SAD (n=25), subjects with subclinical SAD (with fear of a social situation without avoidance or impairment; n=14) and healthy controls (n=22).

Results: The subjective SPST findings showed that avoidance and functioning impairment were due to a negative self-evaluation in SPST and not to the level of anxiety experienced. When all groups were pooled together, there was a positive correlation between levels of anxiety experienced and the volume of the right amygdala. The negative self-evaluation of performance in the SPST was associated with a reduction in the volume of the anterior cingulate complex (ACC) only in the SAD group.

Conclusions: These results suggest that the association between anxiety and amygdala volume may be a part of a continuum of social anxiety. However, the correlation between self-evaluation of performance with reduced ACC volume only in the SAD group does not support the idea that this association may be also part of a continuum.

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Family structure and function among heroin addicts ; a case control study

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Background: It seems that the family of heroin addicts carry certain characteristics which constitute the base for the indulgence in psychosocial deterioration. Objectives : To clarify the elements constituting family structure and family function in heroin addicts and to compare it with that of non addict group. Methodology : A sample of 80 heroin dependents diagnosed according to DSM IV TR was studied and compared to a control (non addict) group composed of 20 persons. Data were collected using a pre-designed questionnaire.

Results: parental separation/divorce was higher in the group of addicts compared to control group. Comparing the main caring person among the two groups revealed the following : father (11.3% : 0%) , mother (8.8% : 35%) , both parents (33.8% : 60%) , Addicts were moved to grandparents in 6.3% of cases (0% in non addicts) , to other relatives in 11.3% of cases (0% in non addicts) , and to others (non relatives) in 7.5% of cases (5% in non addicts) , which reflects the instability and change of caring persons for addict. Positive family history for substance abuse was higher in the group of addicts compared to non addicts. Negative feelings towards father and mother were more predominant in heroin addicts' group and also perception of negative attitude from parents.

Conclusion: The family of heroin addict involves a lot of deformities and dysfunctions which need to be considered and highlighted in all therapeutic programs designed for such patients.

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Post traumatic stress disorder and related factors following orthopedic traumas

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Background and Aims: this study designed to determine the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder among patients visited following an orthopedic traumatic injury and to identify changes in vital