

AMYGDALA ACTIVITY CORRELATES WITH ATTENTIONAL BIAS IN PTSD

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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that arises in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The most prevalent hypothesis is that of an increased amygdala activity to threat cues. The amygdala has also shown an implication in orienting attention toward threat. The aim of this study was to explore the correlations between amygdala activity, symptom severity and attentional bias to threat. PTSD patients and healthy controls were assayed on an fMRI emotional face matching task and an attentional detection of target (DOT) task. The amygdala showed enhanced activity in PTSD patients (vs. healthy individuals). It positively correlated with anxiety scores and PTSD symptoms. It also positively correlated with the disengagement index during the attentional DOT task. Mostly, these results provide preliminary support for an implication of the amygdala in attention orientation to threat in PTSD, whereby in patients amygdala hyperactivity would cause attentional biases, which in turn would induce anxious symptomatology. These results are further discussed in light of recent theories concerned with cortico-limbic functioning and clinical implications.