The Development of an Embedded Figures Test for the Detection of Feigned Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Adulthood.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:
It has been shown that an increasing number of adults deliberately feign attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which demonstrates the need for new tests designed to detect feigned ADHD.

METHODS:
An Embedded Figures Test (EFT) was developed for the detection of feigned ADHD in adulthood. EFT performance of 51 adults with ADHD was compared to the performance of 52 matched healthy individuals, as well as to 268 undergraduate students who were randomly allocated in a simulation design to one of four experimental conditions, i.e. a control group, a naïve simulation group, a symptom-coached simulation group or a test-coached simulation group. Furthermore, an independent sample of 11 adults with ADHD as well as a sample of 17 clinicians experienced in the work with adults with ADHD were assessed for further validation of the EFT.

RESULTS:
The EFT was relatively easy to perform for both patients with ADHD and healthy comparisons as shown by low error rates and non-significant group differences. However, simulation groups differed from patients with ADHD by significant and large effects. An EFT index for the prediction of feigned ADHD was derived based on logistic regression coefficients. Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) demonstrated good classification accuracy of feigned ADHD relative to ADHD (AUC = 94.8%), i.e. high sensitivity (88%) and specificity (90%).

CONCLUSIONS:
This study supports the utility of the EFT for the detection of feigned adult ADHD.