Discriminatory power of executive functions and of theory of mind in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Rationale for intervention


Abstract

INTRODUCTION:
Executive functions and theory of mind (ToM) deficits are present in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Identifying the magnitude of the association between executive functions and ToM is important for understanding the disorder.

AIMS:
This study adopts a naturalistic evaluation approach to analyse the executive functions versus ToM ability to discriminate between children with ADHD and typically developing children and to identify the degree of association between deficits in the components of executive functions (behavioural regulation and metacognitive) and ToM.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS:
Thirty-five children with ADHD and 37 typically developing children-7 to 11 years old, matched for age and intelligence quotient participated in this study. Parents assessed ToM skills and teachers estimated the executive functions.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS:
The percentage of children with ADHD classified correctly was higher in the discriminant analysis where the executive functions components were introduced as an independent variable than in the discriminant analysis performed with the ToM. However, a high percentage of children with executive functions deficits had also problems in ToM. Interventions focused on the development of a broad range of executive processes are reviewed.