Neurological soft signs, but not theory of mind and emotion recognition deficit distinguished children with ADHD from healthy control

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Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is associated with social cognition impairment, executive dysfunction and motor abnormalities, consisting in the persistence of neurological soft signs (NSS). Theory of mind (ToM) and emotion recognition (ER) deficit of children with ADHD have been interpreted as a consequence of their executive dysfunction, particularly inhibitory control deficit. To our knowledge, there are not studies that evaluate the possible correlation between the ToM and ER deficit and NSS in the population with ADHD, while this association has been studied in other psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia. Therefore, the aim of this study was to evaluate ToM and ER and NSS in a sample of 23 drug-naïve children with ADHD and a sample of 20 healthy children and the possible correlation between social cognition dysfunction and NSS in ADHD. Our findings suggest that ToM and ER dysfunction is not a constant feature in the population with ADHD, while NSS confirmed as markers of atypical neurodevelopment and predictors of the severity of functional impairment in children with ADHD.