Decreased Faux Pas Recognition and Parental Underestimation of Social Deficits in ADHD Children: A Pilot Study

Obioha O, Papaioannou H, Mendoza M and Milanaik RL.


Abstract

Background

Social skills deficits are common in children with ADHD. Most research has focused on Theory of Mind deficits in ASD patients with less focus on the ADHD child. Although children with ADHD are considered poor reporters of self-social functioning, parents are expected to be more accurate reporters of social underachievement.

Objective

1. To assess social deficits in ADHD youth in a using Faux Pas Recognition tests.
2. To assess accuracy of parent predictions of their child’s performance.

Methods

Faux Pas Recognition tests (FPR), adapted from Simon Baron Cohen, were administered to ADHD children. FPR contain vignettes with and without social faux pas. Subjects were requested to identify the presence/absence of faux pas, ascribe feelings to characters, and answer control questions. Results were compared to previously published norms. Concurrently, parents were asked to predict their ADHD child’s accuracy on these FPR tests and rate their child’s level of social development. These results were compared to the individual child’s performance. Results were analyzed using t-tests and an ANOVA (analysis of variance).

Results

Sample consisted of 50 patients with ADHD (41 male) aged 7 to 17 years (mean 9.9 ± 2.5 years). ADHD children performed worse on the “absence of faux pas” condition than non-ADHD children (one sample t (63)=2.50, p=0.0150.) A one-way ANOVA showed that the effect of age was significant, F (3, 46)=6.16, p=0.0013. Children aged 7 and 8 scored lowest on FPR. Parents grossly overestimated their children’s accuracy at perceiving faux pas (paired t(49)= -5.70, p<0.001).

Conclusion

ADHD children performed significantly worse on Faux Pas Recognition testing than non-ADHD norms, indicating ADHD children may have substantial difficulties evaluating social situations. A large discrepancy was noted between subject’s Faux Pas Recognition scores and their parents’ predictions prompting concerns as to whether parents of ADHD children appropriately anticipate their children’s social needs.