

Expectancy Effects on Self-Reported Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms in Simulated Neurofeedback: A Pilot Study.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

Expectancy is a psychological factor that can impact treatment effectiveness. Research on neurofeedback for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) suggests expectancy may contribute to treatment outcomes, though evidence for expectancy as an explanatory factor is sparse. This pilot study investigated the effects of expectancies on self-reported ADHD symptoms in simulated neurofeedback.

METHOD:

Forty-six adults who were concerned that they had ADHD expected to receive active neurofeedback, but were randomly assigned to receive a placebo with false feedback indicating attentive (positive false feedback) or inattentive (negative false feedback) states. Effects of the expectancy manipulation were measured on an ADHD self-report scale.

RESULTS:

Large expectancy effects were found, such that individuals who received positive false feedback reported significant decreases in ADHD symptoms, whereas individuals who received negative false feedback reported significant increases in ADHD symptoms.

CONCLUSIONS:

Findings suggest that expectancy should be considered as an explanatory mechanism for ADHD symptom change in response to neurofeedback.