The effect of methylphenidate on decision making in patients with borderline personality disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder


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Abstract

Impaired decision making in patients with borderline personality disorder (BPD) has been reported in several studies. Although methylphenidate (MPH) is known to ameliorate impaired decision making in patients with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), it has not yet been examined in patients with BPD. We therefore assessed the efficacy of a single dose of MPH on cognitive functions and decision making in patients with BPD. Twenty-two patients diagnosed with BPD participated in the study. The study was a randomized, double-blind placebo-controlled, random block order cross-over trial. Patients participated in two sessions and performed the Test of Variables of Attention, a digit-span test, and the computerized Iowa Gambling Task, after they had been administered either the MPH or a placebo. ADHD symptoms were assessed using the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale-18. Lower scores on the inattention symptoms scale were associated with a greater improvement in decision making following the administration of MPH when compared with improvements in patients with higher ADHD scores [F(1,17)=5.63, P=0.030]. We conclude that MPH may improve decision making in patients with BPD, although this effect is mediated by the level of ADHD symptoms. Further studies are needed to assess whether a prolonged beneficial effect of MPH on decision making in patients with BPD might also be present in 'real life'.