

Impulsivity and its association with childhood trauma experiences across bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and borderline personality disorder

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Impulsivity is a core feature of the attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and is one of the DSM-V diagnostic criteria for borderline personality disorder (BPD). Impulsivity is also present in bipolar disorder (BD). Impulsivity has been linked to adverse behavior (suicidality,...) and to traumatic childhood experiences. Our study explored impulsivity in BPD, BD, ADHD and healthy controls (CTRL) and investigated the impact of early trauma on impulsivity.

METHODS:

744 patients with BD (n = 276), BPD (n = 168), ADHD (n = 173) or a combination (BPD_BD, n = 29; BPD_ADHD, n = 94, BD_BPD_ADHD n = 13) and 47 controls were included. All subjects were completed the Baratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-10) and the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ).

RESULTS:

BD reported the same levels of impulsiveness as CTRL. When BPD and BD are co-morbid, impulsivity increased to reach the level of BPD. Impulsiveness was significantly associated to traumatic childhood event for BD and CTRL, not for BPD and ADHD.

LIMITATIONS:

Impulsivity was assessed on the basis of a self-report questionnaire and not by the mean of an objective measure such as a neuropsychological test. Moreover, we don't know what treatment our pathological subjects were receiving. But, ADHD and BPD, despite the probable treatment, were more impulsive than healthy CTRLs who did not take medications.

CONCLUSIONS:

Impulsivity is probably not a feature of BD but is associated with the presence of traumatic childhood experiences, especially for euthymic patients, unlike BPD and ADHD. So, it seems essential to assess the presence of early trauma to reduce the impulsivity and improve the evolution of BD.
