

Methods: The initial orienting of attention, the attentional engagement, and the attentional maintenance to different emotional scenes in competition (i.e. happy, neutral, threatening and sad) were measured by recording the eye movements during a 20 seconds free-viewing task.

Results: The main findings were: i) children with autism spectrum conditions showed an initial orientating bias towards threatening stimuli; and ii) while typically developed children revealed an attentional engagement and attentional maintenance bias towards threatening stimuli, children with autism spectrum conditions did not.

Conclusions: The findings of the present study are consistent with the affective information processing theories and shed light on the underlying mechanisms of social disturbances in autism spectrum conditions.

Keywords: autism spectrum condition; emotions; Eye movements; childhood

EPP0161

An antisaccade task for measuring the attentional characteristics of social information processing in children with autism spectrum conditions

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Introduction: Autistic Spectrum Condition is often characterized by the presence of deficits in social interaction. An abnormal attentional processing may explain these difficulties, as it has been suggested that individuals with autism spectrum conditions may have problems with orienting attention to socially relevant stimuli and/or inhibiting their attentional responses to irrelevant ones.

Objectives: The aim of the current study is to shed light on this issue by the assessment of the attentional orienting and inhibitory control to emotional stimuli (angry, happy, and neutral faces).

Methods: An antisaccade task (with both prosaccade and antisaccade blocks) was applied to a final sample of 29 children with autism spectrum conditions and 27 children with typical development.

Results: The main findings were: i) children with autism spectrum condition committed more antisaccade error when seeing angry faces than happy or neutral faces, while children with typical development committed more antisaccade errors when seeing happy faces than neutral faces, and ii) latencies in the prosaccade and antisaccade blocks were associated with the severity of autism symptoms.

Conclusions: These results suggest that children with autism spectrum conditions show an impaired inhibitory control when angry faces are presented. This bias to negative high-arousal information is congruent with affective information-processing theories suggesting that threatening stimuli induce an overwhelming response in autism. From a clinical perspective, therapeutic strategies that focus on shifting attention to emotional stimuli may improve autism symptomatology and their social functioning.

Keywords: inhibitory control; autism spectrum condition; antisaccade task; eye-tracker

EPP0162

Use of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation in an adolescent with autism spectrum disorder and comorbid major depression disorder with anxiety symptoms: A case study.

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Introduction: Psychiatric comorbidities, including depressive and anxiety disorders, are common in individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Use of conventional therapies for treating depression and anxiety are of limited efficacy in individuals with ASD making treatment a challenging field. Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) is a safe and efficacious technique in major depressive disorder, and a similar approach could yield therapeutic benefits in ASD.

Objectives: The aim of this case study is to present the effectiveness of rTMS in a 17 year old patient diagnosed with ASD and comorbid major depression disorder with anxiety symptoms.

Methods: This is a case study of a male adolescent aged 17, diagnosed with ASD and comorbid major depression disorder with anxiety symptoms, suicidal ideation and aggressive behavior. The protocol applied was 4 weeks of daily rTMS sessions. This involved rTMS to the left dorsomedial prefrontal cortex (10 Hz, 3,000 pulses/120% motor threshold) to treat depressive symptoms and to the right (50Hz, 600 pulses/ 120%motor threshold) to treat anxiety symptoms. Assessments were conducted using the BDI, PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scales at baseline and one month follow up. Suicidal ideation and aggressive behavior were assessed by a clinician at same intervals.

Results: Patient showed overall improvement in scores both in depression and anxiety scales. Suicidal Ideation and aggressive behavior showed significant reduction. No side effects were recorded during therapy.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that the use of rTMS therapy in adolescents in the autistic spectrum and comorbid major depression disorder and anxiety symptoms is an efficacious and safe therapeutic treatment option.

Keywords: r-TMS; major depression disorder; autism spectrum disorder

EPP0163

The relationship between bullism, depression and suicidal thought in adolescents in albania

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