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VOLITION INHIBITORY TO EMOTIONAL STIMULI IN DEPRESSION: EVIDENCE FROM THE ANTISACCADE TASKS

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Introduction: Most previous researches indicated that impaired inhibition to emotional stimuli could be one of the important cognitive characteristics of depression individuals. The antisaccade tasks which composed of prosaccade task (PS) and antisaccade task (AS) were often used to investigate response inhibition.

Aims: This study aimed to investigate the volition inhibition toward emotional stimuli in depressed mood undergraduates (DM).

Methods: Subjects were grouped as 21 DM and 25 non-depressed undergraduates (ND) on the Beck Depression Inventory and Self-rating Depression Scale. The antisaccade tasks were conducted to examine the inhibition abilities by varying the arousal level of volition (low and high) of the tasks, with happy, neutral and sad facial expressions as stimuli.

Results: The results showed that at the low volition level in the AS condition, the correct saccade latency in the DM were significant slower than the ND; The DM had reliable higher direction error rates in response to emotional facial expressions, especially for sad expressions. However, all of the differences disappeared in the high volition level antisaccade tasks. The amplitude errors data were not influenced by emotional facial expressions, and there were no group differences across tasks.

Conclusions: These results indicated the DM showed slower speed of cognitive processing and impaired inhibition abilities toward emotional faces than the ND, particularly for sad faces, but these abilities will be repaired in the high arousal level of volition, which enlighten us that training the DM's volition level of inhibition could prove to be an effective strategy to alleviate depression.