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Introduction: Alexithymia has been shown to be related to many psychiatric and somatic illnesses. Neurobiological underpinnings of alexithymia are important to be known.

Aim: To review the literature about advances in theory and research of alexithymia

Methods: Searches were undertaken in PubMed and other databases, from 2007 until 2012, using keywords 'alexithymia', 'psychopathology' and 'psychosomatics'.

Results: Neurobiological model has explored the relationship between alexithymia and emotional process. Research data indicates modulation of emotional responses from the superior cortical systems, involving an integrative hemispheric function, that is, the left hemispheric verbal capacity in conjunction with the ability to evaluate and regulate emotions of the right hemisphere. Some studies point to a bidirectional inter-hemispheric deficit, which affects affective regulation and the ability to communicate emotions and to fantasize. Affective and cognitive clinical features of alexithymia are described. Recent epidemiology emphasizes comorbid somatic pathology, as well as other psychopathology manifestations.

Conclusions: Alexithymia is a multidimensional construct, with undeniable heuristic value. Therefore, more neurobiological research should be done, such as functional imaging studies, to keep finding the biological factors of alexithymia's etiology, so that new perspectives can be approached.