

Symposia

SES01. AEP Section "Child Psychiatry": Antecedents and mechanisms of mental disorders during childhood and adolescence

Chairs: M. Schmidt (D), H. Hafner (D)

SES01.01

DEVELOPMENTAL PRECURSORS OF AFFECTIVE ILLNESS IN A GENERAL POPULATION BIRTH COHORT

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tricht University, Maastricht, the Netherlands*

Background: Recent evidence suggests that neurodevelopmental impairment may be a risk factor for later affective disorder.

Methods: Associations between childhood developmental characteristics and affective disorder were examined in a prospectively studied national British birth cohort of 5362 individuals born in the week March 3–9th 1946. Mental state examinations by trained interviewers at ages 36 and 43 years identified 270 cases with adult affective disorder (AD). Teachers' questionnaires completed at age 13 and 15 years identified 195 cases who had shown evidence of childhood affective disturbance (CAD).

Results: Female gender and low educational test scores at ages 8, 11 and 15 years were a risk factor for AD, CAD and AD without CAD. In addition, attainment of motor milestones was later in CAD cases (OR = 1.2; 95% CI: 1.1–1.3), followed by, and independent of, greater risk of speech defects between the ages of 6 and 15 years (OR = 2.0; 1.3–3.0), decreased psychomotor alertness on medical examination between ages 4–11 years (OR = 4.6; 2.2–9.7), and an excess of twitching and grimacing motor behaviours in adolescence (OR = 3.9; 2.5–6.1). Persistent affective disturbance in childhood was strongly associated with persistent illness in adulthood (OR = 7.8; 2.6–23.2).

Conclusion: The findings give credence to the suggestion that affective disorder, especially its early onset form, is preceded by impaired neurodevelopment.

SES01.02

POPULATION BIRTH COHORTS: ANTECEDENTS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

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People who develop schizophrenia and other psychoses are different from their peers as children, long before these syndromes begin. Modern epidemiological techniques taking advantage of large general population samples, usually cohorts assembled for other reasons, are defining these developmental differences in detail.

Domains now recognised as being abnormal in schizophrenia, such as language, cognition, motor systems, and social behaviour are shown to be already awry in the early years of life. This questions our nosological concepts of psychosis, suggesting a longitudinal or life-course dimension to the phenotype. It raises the possibility of evidence-based prediction, early identification and intervention, as well as posing questions about the mechanism of psychosis. From the point of view of causation, genetic and epigenetic factors must exert their effect in early life, some before birth. Evidence regarding the precise nature of these early causal components remains controversial. This controversy tests many disciplines, from epidemiology through to neurobiology, and represent some of the greatest challenges in our understanding of psychosis

SES01.03

PREMORBID FEATURES OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

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In childhood, more than 50% of all patients with schizophrenia, were characterised as 'different'. In the retrospective literature these children are described as extremely anxious, having difficulties in social contact, daydreaming and having impaired motor functions. Prospective longitudinal studies of children with a high genetic risk factor for schizophrenia indicate that these children have emotional instability, a low frustration tolerance, a high vulnerability for stress, problems with social contacts, and tempers which are difficult to handle. In conclusion, these children do have PDD-like characteristics. Nowadays in child psychiatry this complex of symptoms is called multiple complex developmental disorder (MCDD). Recent research in our child- and adolescent department of psychiatry at the University Hospital Utrecht made clear that stress responses (cortisol) and visual occipital P300 responses differ between children with MCDD and children with autism. These results reveal opportunities for future research into early detection of patients with a high risk for schizophrenia.

SES01.04

GENESIS AND COURSE OF ANXIETY AND CONDUCT DISORDERS FROM CHILDHOOD TO EARLY ADULTHOOD

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Genesis and course of anxiety and conduct disorders from childhood to early adulthood. A cohort of 399 eight year old children has been followed until age 25. Psychiatric assessment in-between took place at the age of 13 and of 18 years. Point and lifetime prevalence rates for general or total psychiatric disorder, anxiety disorders and conduct disorders are described. Persistence rates of anxiety and conduct disorders are different and persistence rates from childhood to early adulthood are dependent on disorder and gender, for conduct disorder much higher than for anxiety