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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

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How are cognitive deficits relevant to childhood bipolar disorder?

Deficits across various cognitive domains are a common feature of bipolar disorder, and are strongly associated with difficulties in activities of daily living. Early age at onset of the illness is associated with more severe symptoms and poor prognosis than later age at onset, and cognitive deficits in children with the disorder may also differ from those observed in older patients. Identifying cognitive deficits in children with bipolar disorder contributes to the development of specific treatments and rehabilitation approaches.

What is the evidence for cognitive deficits in childhood bipolar disorder?

Moderate quality evidence suggests large impairments in global cognition, verbal and visual learning and memory, and working memory in youth with bipolar disorder compared to youth without bipolar disorder of similar age (average 13 years) and IQ (average 104). There were no impairments found in attention/vigilance, reasoning and problem solving, and processing speed.

High quality evidence finds a medium to large effect of poorer emotion recognition, and moderate quality evidence finds a large effect of poorer theory of mind in youth with bipolar disorder compared to age-matched controls (13-16yrs).

Moderate quality evidence finds a medium to large effect of poorer accuracy on emotion recognition in youth with bipolar disorder compared to age-matched controls. There was a smaller, non-significant effect of poorer response time. Unmedicated youth showed longer response times than medicated youth. Caucasian youth with bipolar disorder showed both longer response times and poorer accuracy than non-Caucasian youth.

For more information see the technical table



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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au.