

Assessment of Attention and Hyperactivity Symptoms in Offsprings of Parents with Bipolar Disorder

A. Khoweiled, T. Goeuli, H. El-Shinnawy

Abstract:

Objectives: to verify if offsprings of bipolar patients suffer from psychiatric symptoms especially attention and hyperactivity problems more than children of normal parents. **Method:** the study group consists of children of 60 subjects; divided into two groups, group (A) which contain children of 30 ICD10 diagnosed recurrent bipolar patients (n=37) and group (B) which contains children of 30 normal parents (n=31). Psychopathology, including attention and hyperactivity problems was assessed by Child Behavioral Checklist (CBCL) and Conners' rating scale (CRS). **Results:** Children of bipolar patients score higher on the total score of the (CRS). Attention/hyperactivity and somatization are prominent behavioral problems especially for those with parents of the manic type. They also express more other behavioral problems on the (CBCL). Boys show more impulsivity and externalizing problems than girls. **Conclusion:** having a bipolar parent is an important factor for liability to attention and hyperactivity problems.

Introduction:

Offsprings of bipolar parents have been identified as such a high-risk group. Several studies have reported an increased prevalence of psychiatric disorders in children of parents with bipolar disorder (Chang et al, 2000, Wals et al. 2001). Other studies found higher percentages of clinical psychiatric symptoms in children of bipolar patients compared to children of normal control, as attention problems (16% in children of bipolar sample compared to 5% in children of controls), labile mood (10% and 3% respectively), sleep disorders (7% and 4% respectively), impairment at school (16% and 5% respectively), suicidal thoughts (3% and 0% respectively), talkativeness (7% and 3% respectively) and obsessive traits (8% and 4% respectively) (Egeland et al., 2003). A meta-analysis estimated a 4.0 times greater risk in bipolar offspring for developing a mood disorder compared with offspring of healthy parents (Lapalme et al., 1997). And a recent study reported that 38% of children of bipolar patients are at risk for developing bipolar disorder compared to only 17% in children of normal parents (Egeland et al., 2003). Prepubertal bipolar disorder may present atypically, with brief manic episodes or sustained conduct and impulse-control problems. Early disruptive behavior in some children may in fact be a prodromal sign of bipolar or other mood disorder (Wozniak et al., 1995, Carlson, 1995, Egeland et al., 2000) which may

direct the attention toward the need for early intervention. Disruptive behaviors (ADHD) plus mania may represent a developmental subtype of bipolar disorder that will eventually make up 20% to 30% of adult bipolar disorders (Biederman et al., 2000). This paper aims to assess the presence of attention and hyperactivity symptoms in bipolar patients' offsprings to find if they are at higher risk for psychopathology necessitating early assessment and intervention.

Subjects and Methods:

The sample comprised two groups: a study group (Group A) which includes children of 30 ICD 10 diagnosed bipolar patients (n=37) and a comparison group (Group B) which includes children of 30 normal parents (n=31). All children included in this study were Egyptians with an age range from 6-12 years. Children were interviewed using a semi-structured interview for diagnosis. Children with mental retardation, history of head trauma, epilepsy, substance abuse or physical disability were excluded. The parents with bipolar disorder (13 males and 17 females) were recruited from the outpatient clinic and diagnosed by a semi-structured interview to have a history of recurrent attacks of manic, mixed or bipolar depressive disorder. Parents with a history of single episode, history of substance abuse, epilepsy, or organic brain disease were excluded.