

## **P-229 - AN INVESTIGATION OF ATTENTION PROCESSES IN CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME: HEALTH-THREAT RELATED ATTENTIONAL BIASES AND ATTENTIONAL CONTROL**

R.Hou<sup>1</sup>, R.Moss-Morris<sup>2</sup>, A.Risdale<sup>3</sup>, P.Jeevaratnam<sup>1</sup>, K.Mogg<sup>3</sup>, B.Bradley<sup>3</sup>, R.Peveler<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, Southampton, <sup>2</sup>Institute of Psychiatry, University College London, London, <sup>3</sup>School of Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK

**Background:** Attentional bias is an important psychological mechanism that has been extensively explored within the anxiety literature and more recently in chronic pain. Cognitive behavioural models of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and chronic pain suggest an overlap in the mechanisms of these two conditions. The current study investigated attentional bias towards health-threat stimuli in individuals with CFS, compared to healthy controls. The study also examined whether individuals with CFS have impaired executive attention, and how it was related to attentional bias.

**Methods:** Two participant groups, CFS (n = 27) and healthy control (n = 35), completed a Visual Probe Task measuring attentional bias towards health-threat stimuli (words and pictures) presented at 500ms and 1250ms, and an Attention Network Test measuring alerting, orienting and executive attention. Participants also completed a series of standard self-report measures.

**Results:** When compared to the control group, the CFS group showed greater attentional bias towards threat-words, but not pictures, regardless of stimulus duration. This was not related to anxiety or depression. The CFS group was also significantly impaired on executive attention compared to the controls. Post-hoc analyses indicated that only CFS individuals with poor executive attention showed a threat-word bias when compared to controls and CFS individuals with good executive attention.

**Conclusions:** The findings from this study suggest that CFS individuals show enhanced attentional biases for health-threat stimuli, which may contribute to the perpetuation of the condition. Moreover, the attentional biases in CFS are dependent on an individual's capacity to voluntarily control their attention.