

PW01-13 - NEUROCOGNITIVE MECHANISMS OF EMOTION REGULATION IN DEPRESSION

M. Hyett^{1,2}, M. Green^{1,2}, G. Parker^{1,2}

¹*School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales,* ²*Black Dog Institute, Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick, NSW, Australia*

Objectives: Neurocognitive impairments in depression have traditionally been regarded as epiphenomena of the illness. Increasing evidence for the stability of neurocognitive deficits outside of depressive episodes implicates their potential role as mechanisms for emotion dysregulation associated with depressive states. This study thus examined associations between neurocognition and emotion regulation in currently depressed patients.

Methods: Participants were thirty patients presenting with current DSM-IV major depression. Participants completed neurocognitive tasks assessing executive function, attention, working memory, and response control to emotional stimuli. The capacity to implement *functional* emotion regulation strategies was assessed using additive sub-scales from the 'Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire' (CERQ), while emotion regulation *difficulties* were assessed using the 'Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale' (DERS).

Results: Neurocognitive performance was compared between sub-groups of patients identified via median split on combined CERQ and DERS items. Patients reporting greater difficulties in emotion regulation demonstrated impaired sustained attention and response control, and increased reaction time to negative stimuli, in comparison to those reporting fewer difficulties. In addition, patients with better access to functional strategies demonstrated better attentional performance and fewer errors of omission to positive stimuli on the response control task.

Conclusions: Neuropsychological impairments in attention and response inhibition may contribute to emotion dysregulation in depressive episodes. By implication, remediation of particular neurocognitive deficits may improve the capacity to implement context-appropriate emotion regulation strategies in affective disorders. Examination of associations between neurocognitive impairment and emotion dysregulation outside of acute illness episodes is necessary to determine the relevance of these associations for illness development.