

The CCC2000 Birth Cohort Study: Theory of Mind in Children at Risk of Psychosis.

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Background: The presence of psychotic symptoms in the absence of diagnostic-able psychotic illness in childhood may express psychosis liability. As much as 6-14% of all children aged 11-14 years have experienced hallucinations, delusions or other psychotic-like symptoms or experiences (PLE). Psychological models of psychosis explain delusions as the result of the individual trying to make sense of unusual experience. Deficits in Theory of Mind (ToM), which refers to the ability to understand the emotions and intentions of others, may limit the normal human capacity to attribute mental states, and to consider unusual experiences in the light of common sense and thus, to make likely explanations of the reason for such experiences. ToM deficits have been found to be associated to both psychotic and negative symptoms of schizophrenia in clinical as well as in non-clinical samples.

Method: The study is conducted as part of the 11-year follow-up of the CCC2000, a prospective longitudinal investigation of 6090 children born in 2000 in the Copenhagen County. All Children are screened for PLE by the Development and Well Being Assessment (DAWBA) section T, a web-based self-report questionnaire covering hallucinations, delusions and thought disorders. All children are invited to the clinic and examined with the 'ToM Storybook Frederik'. Furthermore, the children are interviewed with the K-SADS-PL, using the screening section and the supplements on psychotic and affective symptoms in order to gain an observer-based rating of PLE during the past month and lifetime before.

Results: The presentation will include preliminary results on the relationships between PLE and ToM in general, and the association between the hypo- and hyper-functioning types of ToM deficits and the patterns of hallucinations, delusional thoughts, and thought disorders in the group of 507 children interviewed as of December 1st 2011. Deficits in ToM are expected to be associated with PLE in a dose-response relationship. Hyper-ToM will be more strongly associated to delusional thoughts than hypo-ToM.

Discussion: The results will help in identifying early patterns of risk and contribute to the understanding of the early stages of the development of psychosis. These findings might increase the potential for successful preventive interventions.