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The real impact of affective temperaments: new perspectives from Argentina

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Address: Department of Neuroscience, University of Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina
from International Society on Brain and Behaviour: 3rd International Congress on Brain and Behaviour
Thessaloniki, Greece. 28 November – 2 December 2007

Published: 17 April 2008

Annals of General Psychiatry 2008, **7**(Suppl 1):S61 doi:10.1186/1744-859X-7-S1-S61

This abstract is available from: <http://www.annals-general-psychiatry.com/content/7/S1/S61>

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Background

We have examined the prevalence of affective temperaments between clinically unaffected relatives of bipolar patients and investigated the impact of these “subaffective” forms on their quality of life (QoL) in seven sites across Argentina.

Material and methods

We administered the scales TEMPS-A Buenos Aires [1] and Quality of Life Index-Spanish version, to a sample of non-ill first degree relatives of bipolar disorder patients (“cases”) and controls without family history of affective illness.

Results

Mean scores on all TEMPS-A subscales were significantly higher in cases, except for hyperthymia. The prevalence of affective temperaments, according to Argentinean cut-off points [2], was also higher, with statistical significance for cyclothymic and anxious temperaments. Regarding QoL, we have found an affectation of QoL domains for all temperaments, except hyperthymia. Both findings support the concept of a spectrum of subthreshold affective traits or temperaments in bipolar pedigrees [3].

Discussion

Our study confirms that healthy relatives of bipolar probands exhibit a higher degree of temperamental dysregulation than normal controls and demonstrates that affective temperaments can serve as an endophenotype for bipolar disorder [4] as judged by the fact that “clinically well” relatives show these traits at a statistically significantly higher than appropriately chosen controls.

In this study we go beyond these considerations to test the hypothesis that the “well relatives” of bipolar probands

not only exhibit such traits, but could also show some impairment as a result of a temperamental foundation. Our results support the idea that predominant temperaments have a direct impact on their quality of life (QoL).

References

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