

Cognitive dysfunction in obsessive compulsive disorder

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In recent years, several clinical observations and neuropsychological studies have pointed to the association of OCD with a distinctive pattern of cognitive impairment. This study aimed to assess the cognitive functioning and to identify its correlation with the severity of OCD symptoms. The study included 37 OCD patients and 60 healthy control subjects matched with patients in age, sex and

level of education. Both patients and control subjects were evaluated by psychiatric diagnosis according to

DSM-IV ; psychometric assessment of the severity of OCD symptoms by Yale-Brown obsessive-compulsive scale and of the degree of obsessional slowness by the Obsessional Slowness Questionnaire ; cognitive assessment by Wechsler adult intelligence scale (WAIS) and the cognitive ability screening instrument (CASI). There was a tendency for compulsive and slow patients to have the severest OCD symptoms. OCD patients had cognitive dysfunction in certain abilities, especially digit symbols (WAIS), attention, concentration and fluency (CASI). The severity of illness was not related to cognitive impairment, but there was a positive correlation between the duration of illness and a negative correlation between age at onset and cognition. The compulsive group had a lower score than mixed group in comprehension, arithmetic digit span, total IQ (WAIS) and concentration, fluency and total CASI score. This finding is compatible with a higher "organicity" of compulsive behavior than of obsessive behavior. Also, the slow group had lower scores than non- slow and adjusted-slow subgroups on most subscales of WAIS and CASI. This is consistent with impairment of frontostriatal function in OCD patients.