

Neurological soft signs and cognitive dysfunction in bipolar patients in an Egyptian sample : State or trait markers?

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This study was carried out on a sample of 40 euthymic bipolar subjects diagnosed according to DSM-IV diagnostic criteria, 85 healthy first degree relatives and 25 first degree relatives with other psychiatric disorders. In addition, there was a control group composed of 50 healthy individuals. The study aimed to investigate whether bipolar patients have cognitive dysfunction and neurological soft signs, if they represent state or trait markers and if they are related to gender, age or other clinical variables. All patients, relatives and non relative controls were subjected to general and neurological history and examination, neurological evaluation scale for assessment of soft neurological signs, Wechsler adult intelligence test, Wechsler memory scale-revised and Wisconsin Card sorting test assessment of the cognitive functions. Neurological soft signs were more prevalent in bipolar patients than relatives and controls, but also significantly more in relatives than controls. Similarly, both patients and relatives groups had a poorer memory and executive performance than the control group. Neurological soft signs and cognitive dysfunction could be considered as trait markers and lends support to the theory that bipolar disorder may be a neurodevelopmental disorder.