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Working memory, processing speed, and IQ in youth with mood disorders and psychotic features

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The presence of psychotic symptoms with mood disorders, such as Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) or Bipolar Disorder (BD), in children and adolescents seems to reflect severe manifestations of the disorders. Research with adults with MDD and BD has generally revealed concomitant impairments in attention, processing speed, working memory, and executive functioning deficits. Cognitive deficits in children and adolescents with severe mood disorders have been less thoroughly examined. In the present study, we investigated the Full Scale IQ scores, working memory and processing speed of 80 discharged child and adolescent psychiatric inpatients, aged 8 to 17 years, with mood disorders, with and without accompanying psychotic features. There were 43 females and 37 males, and the mean age was 14.21 years. Based on DSM-IV criteria, there were 7 patients with MDD, 43 with BD, and 30 with Mood Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (MD, NOS). When sex, age, and presence of psychotic symptoms were controlled, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance indicated no significant differences in cognitive functioning between the MDD and BD groups, or between those with MDD or BD and those with MD, NOS. The patients with MDD or BD and psychotic symptoms showed lower Full Scale IQ scores and worse working memory than those with MDD or BD without psychotic symptom. The results point to the importance of psychotic features associated with severe mood disorders in children and adolescents, as well as the need for additional research on developmental differences in mood disorders and cognition.

Biography

James B McCarthy is Associate Professor of Psychology, Pace University, New York City and Clinical Professor of Psychology, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY.

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