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The relation of environment to unipolar recurrent depression

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Objectives: This study examined the relationship between Stressful Life Events (SLE) and recurrent major depressive disorders.

Methods: Three groups of 50 subjects were assessed: Patients with recurrent major depressive disorder with melancholic features; patients with borderline personality disorder; and healthy controls. Interviews for AXIS I and II DSM-IV Disorders were used for diagnosis. The Israel Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Interview Life Event Scale and the Coddington Life Events Schedule were used to measure life events and were confirmed with an interview. Beck Depression Inventory was also administered.

Results: The proportions of loss-related events in childhood and in the year preceding the first episode was higher in the depressed group than in the control groups during the same time period. Proportions of SLE, uncontrolled and independent events were also more common in the depressed patients in the year preceding the first episode. No category of SLE differentiated the groups following the first depressive episode.

Conclusion: The study's conclusion is that SLE plays an important role in the onset of depressive disorders. There are specific kinds of SLE that occur in childhood and in the year preceding the first episode. SLE has a less significant role in the maintenance of this illness. These results confirm the classical psychoanalytic perspective of affective disorder as being related to losses in childhood. It adds however to the modern view that the losses are only pathogenic when they interact with genetic diatheses.

Biography

Netta Horesh Reinman is an assistant professor in the department of psychology, Bar Ilan University, Israel. His main research areas are stressful life events and their influence on mental illness and well-being, mood disorders and suicidality. In parallel to his scientific work, he is a clinical psychologist and served as chief psychologist in Shalvata Mental Hospital and on Ramat-Hen mental outpatient, as well as working in private practice.