
USING AN INDIVIDUALIZED NEUROIMAGING APPROACH TO INVESTIGATE EFFECTS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY IN DEPRESSION. FIRST RESULTS OF THE ZURICH DEPRESSION STUDY.

J. Ernst¹, L. Bohleber¹, A. Richter², J. Vetter¹, H. Himmighoffen¹, E. Hofmann¹, E. Seifritz¹, H. B¹ker¹

¹Clinic for Psychiatry Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, University Hospital for Psychiatry Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland ; ²Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Introduction: Research on neurobiologic underpinnings of psychotherapy in depression is still sparse, particularly in psychodynamic oriented research. At present, there is insufficient data on neurobiologic parameters that could allow a targeted use of therapeutic interventions. One reason for this is the methodological difficulty of investigating complex and individual phenomena relevant to the psychotherapeutic process with functional neuroimaging techniques. The Zurich Depression Study takes up this strong research need developing a pioneer study design.

Methods: An individualized neuroimaging paradigm was developed based on the MIPQS (Maladaptive Interpersonal Q-Sort (Zimmermann et al., accepted), a self report instrument derived from the OPD-2 axis interpersonal relations (Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis 2, Arbeitskreis OPD, 2006). Visual stimuli were developed and tested that systematically illustrate interpersonal behaviour patterns (Interpersonal Relations Picture Set (IRPS)). They are employed in an individualized fMRI experiment. The experiment was validated with ten healthy study participants

Results: Preliminary results suggest that the experimental paradigm is an accurate method to be employed in psychotherapy research with depressed patients. Specific hemodynamic activation patterns observed during the individualized fMRI task involve brain regions commonly identified as playing a role in emotion processing and autobiographic memory. A final overview of these first results will be given at the EPA 2014 congress.