

P01-229

SELF-EVALUATION OF MEMORY FUNCTIONING IN DEPRESSED PATIENTS DURING A SYMPTOMATIC EPISODE AND AFTER RECOVERY

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Objective: Depressed patients tend to under-estimate their everyday memory function. Whether this under-estimation is related to the depressive state, or whether it represents underlying personality traits present also between or after depressive episodes, is not clear.

Methods: Comparisons of subjective memory evaluation as measured by the Everyday Memory Questionnaire (EMQ) were made between sub-groups with Current Depression (N=14), Previous Depression (N=19), and Healthy Controls (N=10). Analyses were adjusted for effects of sociodemographic variables, use of medication, and premorbid intellectual abilities (Similarities sub-test (WASI)). To assess the relationship between affective state and subjective memory function irrespective of actual memory performance, adjustment for objective memory performance as represented by the Total recall sub-task from CVLT and Long-delayed free recall from RCFT was included in a final step in the ANCOVA model.

Results: The overall crude relationship between group and EMQ total score was significant ($F(2,40)=4.11$, $p=0.011$, $\eta^2=.17$). In posthoc follow-up tests, the Currently Depressed reported significantly lower on EMQ than both Previously Depressed and Controls (Dunnett's C test, $p=.018$ and $p=.034$, respectively). However, after adjustment for relevant confounders and mediators, both the Previously and Currently Depressed performed significantly worse on EMQ compared to Controls (overall ANCOVA $F(2,33)=9.22$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.36$; pairwise follow-ups $p=.001$ and $p=.011$, respectively).

Conclusion: Depressed patients' under-estimation of their memory function is independent of mood state and it may represent a vulnerability or personality structure involving negative cognitive patterns that may be successfully targeted by cognitive therapy.