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Schematic beliefs and problem solving performance predict depression in people experiencing persecutory delusions

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Abstract

Depression occurring alongside psychosis is an important treatment target, both in its own right and as a potential maintenance factor for positive psychotic symptoms. The present paper reports a prospective longitudinal analysis of depression and its predictors over six months in a group of 60 participants experiencing persecutory delusions. We hypothesised that negative schematic beliefs about the self and problem solving difficulties would predict the persistence of depression over time. The results showed, as hypothesised, that more negative schematic beliefs about the self and poorer problem solving predicted higher depression scores six months later, beyond what could be predicted by baseline depression scores. These findings support a proposed role for schematic beliefs and problem solving difficulties in the perpetuation of depression occurring alongside psychosis, as has been substantiated for major depressive disorder. Interventionist research is warranted to confirm causal effects.

Keywords

Persecutory delusions; depression; psychosis; schematic beliefs; problem solving; longitudinal

Introduction

Depression is known to be common among people with persecutory delusions (Vorontsova et al., 2013). The importance of such depression as a treatment target in its own right is supported by its associations with suicide, low quality of life, functional impairment and future relapses (Conley et al., 2007). Freeman and colleagues argued that depression also acts as a key maintenance factor for persecutory delusions (Freeman et al., 2002). This theory is substantiated by empirical findings that depression predicts the persistence of paranoia over time (Fowler et al., 2012; Vorontsova et al., 2013). Amelioration of comorbid depression is therefore also a potential therapeutic target in the

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