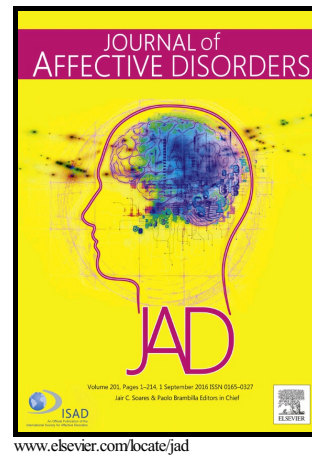


Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0165-0327(17)32543-0
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.02.031>
Reference: JAD9577

To appear in: *Journal of Affective Disorders*

Received date: 8 December 2017
Revised date: 11 January 2018
Accepted date: 16 February 2018

Cite this article as: Christine Schwert, Maren Stohrer, Steffen Aschenbrenner, Matthias Weisbrod and Annette Schröder, Biased neurocognitive self-perception in depressive and in healthy persons, *Journal of Affective Disorders*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.02.031>

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ABSTRACT*Background:*

Cognitive deficits across several domains and subjective complaints about cognition are prevalent in major depression disorder (MDD). Nevertheless, subjective and objective cognitive functions show no associations. However, research concerning the extent and direction of discrepancy is rare. The present study examined the relationship and discrepancy between subjective and objective cognitive deficits both in patients with MDD and healthy individuals.

Method:

Outpatients with MDD ($n = 102$) and a healthy control group ($n = 88$) were assessed with a neuropsychological test battery and completed a questionnaire for the self-assessment of cognitive performance (FLei) concerning the domains of attention, memory, and executive functions.

Results: There were no associations between subjective and objective cognitive deficits in any domain in both the MDD group and the healthy control group. The groups did not differ regarding the extent of the discrepancy between subjective and objective cognition. However, depressed outpatients' subjective cognitive complaints significantly exceeded their neuropsychological deficits, whereas healthy individuals reported significantly higher subjective cognitive functioning than objectively measured.

Limitations:

The cross-sectional study design does not allow for causal conclusions. Due to concerns regarding the suitability of the subjective measure of cognitive deficits used in this study, the findings should be interpreted cautiously.

Conclusions:

The current study reveals a discrepancy between subjective and objective cognitive function not only in the MDD group, but also in the control group. Whereas depressed outpatients tend to underestimate their objective cognitive abilities, healthy individuals tend to overestimate them.

Keywords

major depression, cognitive impairments, outpatients, subjective complaints, discrepancy

1. Introduction

Objectively measured cognitive deficits in the domains of attention, memory, speed of processing, and executive functions are present in major depression disorder (MDD) (Bortolato et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2012; McDermott & Ebmeier, 2009; Ravnkilde et al., 2002). There is emerging evidence that these cognitive deficits persist in spite of the reduction or recovery of affective symptomatology (Bora et al., 2013; Hasselbach et al., 2011; Majer et al., 2004; Reischies & Neu, 2000). Likewise, subjective cognitive impairments, such as complaints about concentration difficulties, are a main feature of MDD (Dilling et al., 1994). Although objectively measured cognitive deficits and subjective cognitive complaints are prevalent in MDD, the majority of studies investigating the relationship between subjective and objective measures show no associations (Svendsen et al., 2012). However, it is not known whether

¹ These authors contributed equally to this work.

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