Title: Kamin Blocking and Latent Inhibition in Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

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Abstract

Children with ADHD tend to be hypersensitive to environmental stimuli, as shown by their high distractibility to environmental changes. Yet, in spite of the widespread knowledge that children with ADHD exhibit selective attentional deficits, empirical findings thus far have been limited. This may be the result of a lack of standard measures, reflecting a need of the validation of new adequate testing strategies.

The focus of this study concerns ‘Kamin Blocking’ (KB) and ‘Latent Inhibition’ (LI), two finely related measures of selective attention processing, based on a conditioned associative paradigm. Pharmacological studies have shown that performance on these two tasks is modulated to some extent by dopamine agonists and antagonists. Up to date, studies have confirmed a reduced LI and KB in schizophrenic patients, when compared to healthy controls. Given the overlap between schizophrenia and ADHD, with regards attentional deficits and dopamine dysregulation, it appears correct to assume that similar KB and LI results will be obtained in children with ADHD.

The present study assessed visual selective attentional performance in children with ADHD, and healthy controls, using two recently developed KB and LI tasks. Subjects in the experimental and control groups were pair-matched on gender, age and IQ. Although the results of this study must be interpreted in the light of its small sample size, they suggest that when compared to controls, KB is indeed reduced in children with ADHD. However results with regards LI were somehow ambiguous. Several reasons for this discrepancy have been put forward.