New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

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Pupillary Response to Emotional Stimuli as a Risk Factor for Depressive Symptoms Following a Natural Disaster: The 2011 Binghamton Flood

Mary L. Woody, Katie L. Burkhouse, Greg J. Siegle, Anastacia Y. Kudinova, Sydney P. Meadows, and Brandon E. Gibb

Can pupillary response be used as an indicator of who is most at risk for depression after a natural disaster? To answer this question, the researchers examined reactions to the 2011 Binghamton flood, which occurred when the remnants of Tropical Storm Lee hit the greater Binghamton, New York, area. Women who had a lifetime history of depression or no history of depression were assessed for symptoms of depression and pupillary responses to emotionally morphed faces 100 days before the flood. One hundred thirteen days later, the researchers collected information on women’s level of episodic flood-related stress and their depressive symptoms. Decreased pupil dilation was found to predict increased post-flood depressive symptoms, but only in women who had experienced high levels of flood-related stress.

Predictors of Postdeployment Functioning in Combat-Exposed U.S. Military Veterans

Seth G. Disner, Mark D. Kramer, Nathaniel W. Nelson, Alexandra J. Lipinski, Julia M. Christensen, Melissa A. Polusny, and Scott R. Sponheim

Research has identified several affective, cognitive, and brain-injury-related factors that contribute to reintegration issues in returning veterans, but these factors are often not jointly studied, leading to questions as to the relative impact of each on postdeployment functioning. U.S. military veterans deployed to combat zones were assessed for functional impairment, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, depression, personality traits, traumatic brain injury, and cognitive performance in a variety
of domains. Analysis with structural equation modeling indicated that internalizing symptoms was a more significant predictor of functional impairment than both traumatic brain injury and cognitive performance. This suggests that it may be useful to target internalizing symptoms in treatments directed at those experiencing problems with postdeployment functioning.

Seven-Year Course of Borderline Personality Disorder Features: Borderline Pathology Is as Unstable as Depression During Adolescence

Christopher C. Conway, Alison E. Hipwell, and Stephanie D. Stepp

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is often construed as a stable unremitting disorder, but recent research suggests this may not be the case. The researchers examined the developmental course of BPD using trait-state occasion modeling — a technique that dissects a condition into time-invariant (trait) and time-variant (occasion) components. Women reported on symptoms of BPD and depression yearly between the ages of 14 and 20. BPD was found to be as stable as depression; a little more than half the variation in BPD symptoms resulted from time-invariant factors and the rest resulted from time-variant factors. This finding has implications for how practitioners diagnose, treat, and prevent the occurrence of BPD symptoms.

Why Do Delusion-Prone Individuals “Jump to Conclusions”? An Investigation Using a Nonserial Data-Gathering Paradigm

Leslie van der Leer, Bjoern Hartig, Maris Goldmanis, and Ryan McKay

Delusion-prone individuals have been found to gather fewer data before coming to a conclusion. It has been suggested that this may be because data gathering is more taxing for them, they make noisier decisions than do control subjects, or because they misjudge the value of evidence. The authors tested these hypotheses in a task in which participants saw a fisherman that had drawn fish from one of two lakes. Each lake contained black and white fish in opposite but complementary ratios (25:75 or 75:25). The participants were asked which lake the fisherman had drawn the fish from and how many fish (between 1 and 10) they would like to see before making their decision. The participants also completed measures of risk aversion, delusion proneness, and intelligence. Higher delusion proneness was associated with gathering less data before making a decision. The data suggest that misjudging the value of the evidence contributed significantly to this bias.