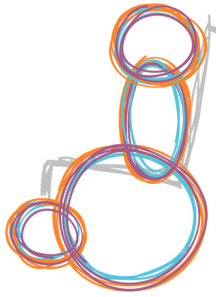


Theory of mind in children with Fragile X syndrome.

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Summary

Studies have shown that children with autism show difficulties with 'theory of mind'. The authors therefore thought it would be extremely beneficial to examine 'theory of mind' abilities in other disability groups, such as children with fragile X syndrome and children with Down syndrome. The aim of the present study was to assess whether boys with fragile X syndrome are impaired in simple social situations that require them to understand their own and others' mental states – in essence: do they have a 'theory of mind'? Two well-standardized tasks of theory of mind were used to examine whether any impairment in 'theory of mind' might be evident in children with fragile X syndrome. The results suggest that children with fragile X syndrome do have impairment in theory of mind that is comparable, although slightly different, then the deficit reported in other groups with learning challenges such as Down syndrome.

Glossary

Theory of mind: Someone who has a healthy 'theory of mind' is aware that other people have their own plans, thoughts, points of view and do not think exactly the same way they do. There is a notion that many autistic individuals have an impaired 'theory of mind'.

Fragile X Syndrome: Fragile X syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by a mutation of a gene on the X chromosome. It is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment and the most common proven cause of autism.

What families should know

If your child has Fragile X Syndrome, it is possible that they will display theory of mind deficits similar to children with Down syndrome. There are subtle differences between the two deficits, however, that you may wish for your child's clinician to be aware of in order to maximize early intervention programs. The details of these differences are contained in the published article referenced below.

What practitioners should know

Clinicians should be aware of the subtle behavioral and cognitive differences between autism and fragile X syndrome in order to maximize early intervention programs that recognize syndrome specific strengths and challenges. It is important to carefully examine social deficits in children with developmental disorders.

Reference

Cornish, K. M., Burack, J., Rahman, A., Munir, F., & Rossi, N. (2005). Theory of mind deficits in children with Fragile X syndrome. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 49, 372- 8.

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