

Case Report of a Patient with Bipolar Disorder and Deafness

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Abstract

Case Report

Deafness is a pathological state of hearing characterized by a partial or total loss of sound perception. It is much more common than previously suspected. Many psychiatric disorders have been associated with deafness, including depression, schizophrenia and other psychoses, anxiety, and neurocognitive disorders. We report the case of a 25-year-old patient who is known to be deaf diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The effect of deafness on mental health is surprisingly overlooked. Early studies of psychiatric patients suggested that hearing loss is an important cause of paranoid illness, but more recent studies of larger populations have failed to confirm this association. The most common diagnoses in deaf people are mood disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Keywords: Bipolar disorder, deafness- case report.

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INTRODUCTION

Deafness is much more common than previously suspected. Many psychiatric disorders have been associated with deafness, including depression, schizophrenia and other psychoses, anxiety, and neurocognitive disorders.

CASE REPORT

We report the case of a 25-year-old patient who was referred to the psychiatric emergency department for extreme psychomotor agitation and hetero-aggressiveness. The patient is known to be deaf and wears an external hearing aid. The psychiatric interview after sedation of the agitation finds a manic symptomatology. In addition, the patient reports depressive episodes with suicidal behavior. The diagnosis of bipolar disorder was retained. The biological assessment was normal. Audiogram finds sensorineural hearing loss, moderate to severe, symmetrical and bilateral. A mood stabilizer, antipsychotic and anxiolytic treatment was initiated. The evolution was favorable. We observed that the level of hearing became normal during the manic attack, and after stabilization of the psychiatric state the level of hearing decreased.

DISCUSSION

The effect of deafness on mental health is surprisingly overlooked [1]. Early studies of psychiatric

patients suggested that hearing impairment is an important cause of paranoid illness, but more recent studies of larger populations have failed to confirm this association [1-3]. The most frequent diagnoses in deaf people are mood disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder [5]. Psychotic disorders and mental retardation, once widely diagnosed among deaf populations, are less common [5]. The prevalence rates of mental disorders in hearing impaired children and adolescents found in the literature vary from 15% to 60% [1]. A study of a sample of Deaf adolescents suggests a high prevalence of psychopathology and argues for a particular emphasis on early detection of significant emotional and behavioral problems in this population [4]. Correlational results support the idea that it is not deafness per se that contributes to psychiatric problems [4]. Deafness may be etiologically related to the psychiatric disorder or may be fortuitous. Deaf professionals have an essential role in mental health services for this population. Treatment strategies should be tailored to meet the individual needs of this population.

CONCLUSION

Evidence is accumulating to suggest that people with hearing loss are vulnerable to depression, social stress and isolation, but reliable controlled studies of psychiatric sequelae are needed.

The high prevalence of erroneous diagnoses made by teams not specialized in the care of deaf people shows the need for the establishment of a bio-psycho-socio-specific language for the deaf.

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