Executive function and risky sexual behavior in individuals with traumatic brain injury

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INTRODUCTION

Executive functions encompass a variety of higher-order abilities such as judgment, planning, decision-making, response monitoring, insight, and self-regulation. After a traumatic brain injury (TBI), 45% of individuals with TBI can present difficulties in executive functioning that can persist as long as 10 years post-injury.

Executive functions are important to put in practice healthy behaviors. For instance, risky sexual behavior includes poor sexual health. Judging a situation as risky or safe can be challenging for some individuals with TBI, and they may be involved in risky behaviors (e.g., smoking, risky driving, drug/alcohol use, among others).

Risky sexual behavior can have negative consequences in terms of sexual health. For instance, risky sexual behavior includes poor sexual health. Judging a situation as risky or safe can be challenging for some individuals with TBI, and they may be involved in risky behaviors (e.g., smoking, risky driving, drug/alcohol use, among others).

OBJECTIVES

To explore the relationship between risky sexual behavior and executive function in individuals with TBI.

METHODS

Introduction: The study was conducted on a total sample of 89 individuals with TBI and 47 healthy controls.

Table 1. Total sample (N=89)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Healthy controls Mean (SD)</th>
<th>TBI Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (Years)</td>
<td>37.6 (10.7)</td>
<td>37.9 (9.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Years)</td>
<td>13.0 (3.0)</td>
<td>12.8 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income (CAD)</td>
<td>31975.6 (18909.9)</td>
<td>39007.5 (19239.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Coma Scale</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.5 (3.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years post-injury</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.3 (4.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were no significant differences between the groups in all of the sociodemographic variables.

CONCLUSIONS

• To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the relationships between risky sexual behavior and the presence of reported dysexecutive problems post-TBI.
• Our findings imply that TBI individuals with dysexecutive problems could present a co-occurrence of risky sexual behavior.
• Given the high frequency of executive problems post-TBI and their repercussion in everyday living, the association between executive function and risky sexual behavior suggest that special attention should be given to individuals with TBI showing difficulties in executive functions in terms of evaluation and interventions that could have a favorable impact on the prevention and remediation of risky behaviors in the sexuality domain.
• Education about risky sexual behavior needs to be included in rehabilitation, independently of injury severity or time since injury.
• Since individuals with TBI with more dysexecutive symptomatology show higher risky sexual behavior, cognitive rehabilitation of executive functions could also help to promote healthy behaviors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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