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Experiential avoidance in the vulnerability to depression among adolescent females

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Abstract

Background

Although various mechanisms in the maternal transmission of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) have been investigated, it is unknown whether experiential avoidance (EA) is a vulnerability factor in the development of depression or a consequence of the illness. The present study utilized a high-risk design to determine if EA indeed poses vulnerability to adolescent MDD. Secondly, we examined the means by which adolescent EA may come to pose vulnerability, namely that it explains the relation between maternal EA and adolescent depressive symptoms.

Methods

One-hundred and forty-six biological mother/adolescent daughter dyads comprised three diagnostic groups: mothers with a history of MDD and their depressed daughters (MDD; $n = 21$), mothers with a history of MDD and their never-depressed daughters (high-risk, HR; $n = 69$), and healthy controls (HCs; $n = 56$).

Results

Groups differed on daughter EA such that the MDD group reported greater EA than the HR group, which in turn reported greater EA than HCs. Daughter EA mediated the relation between maternal EA and daughter depressive symptoms after controlling for maternal depressive symptoms.

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