Impact of an home-based ABM intervention on attentional control, attentional biases and anxious symptoms in socially anxious children :

Insight of electrophysiological datas

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Attentional biases (AB) towards threatening faces are a major feature of social phobia. At a neural level, AB have been indexed by enhanced amplitudes of P1, reflecting increased perceptual processing, and P2, indicating difficulties to remove attention from threatening information. According to Eysenck et al.'s theory (2007), AB would be due to an attentional control deficit whose retraining has shown promising results in adults. The aims of this study were to evaluate the efficacy of a home-based attentional training on AB in socially anxious children and to index the neural changes induced by this procedure. After a first evaluation of AB, fifteen 8 to 12 year-old socially anxious children (mean age = 10.12; SD = .76) completed 10 sessions of attentional retraining after what they completed another evaluation of AB. AB were assessed by an emotional spatial-cueing task in which children had to detect neutral targets cued by neutral or disgusted faces. During retraining sessions, the targets systematically followed the neutral face in order to train children to engage their attention towards savety cues. Children also had to complete measures of anxiety before and after the training. Results confirmed the presence of AB towards disgusted faces in socially anxious children. Although we failed to demonstrate a positive impact of ABM on AB, we found a decrease of anxious symptoms and of the P1 component after the training revealing a diminished attentional engagement toward social information. These datas will be discussed in regard of the distinction between the efficiency and effectiveness processes of the attentional control theory.