

Flux Congress
Abstract

Maternal History of Depression Impacts Neural Responses to Emotional Stimuli in School-Age Children

People with a family history of depression are at a highly increased risk for developing depression themselves compared to people without a family history. Research has suggested that adolescents with at least one parent with a history of lifetime depression show alterations in neural responses to emotional stimuli similar to adults with depression. This type of neural alteration may be a risk factor for developing depression or may serve as an endophenotypic marker of risk. The current study sought to extend previous findings to test effects of maternal depression on neural responses to emotional face stimuli among psychiatrically healthy school age children (7-10 years old). Preliminary data suggests greater amygdala responses to emotional face viewing among children with a maternal history of depression as compared to those with no maternal history of any psychopathology. Follow-up analyses will extend upon these results and previous studies by testing the effects of additional risk factors, including current depression symptoms among mothers, sub-threshold depression symptomology and emotion regulation skills among children, and stressful life events experienced by the children. Overall, these results will help to elucidate the effects of maternal history of depression and other risk factors on limbic responses to emotional stimuli in a diverse sample of psychiatrically healthy children. This may be particularly important to guide understandings of risk for depression among pediatric populations.