

Article: 0397

Topic: EPO07 - e-Poster Oral 07: Consultation Liaison Psychiatry and Psychosomatics, Personality and Personality Disorders, Sexual Medicine and Mental Health, Sexual Disorders, Rehabilitation and Psychoeducation

Androgen-related Psychiatric Variables in Women with Idiopathic Hirsutism

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Introduction: Many psychiatric disorders including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), disruptive behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorders, and some psychiatric characteristics, such as poor empathizing, are regarded to be related to elevated levels of androgens or androgen sensitivity. Idiopathic hirsutism (IH) is a disease characterized by an increased sensitivity of the pilosebaceous unit to circulating androgens in women. However, no studies investigated the potential association between IH and androgen-related psychiatric conditions.

Aims: The purpose of this study was to examine whether IH has a relationship with androgen-related psychiatric conditions.

Methods: Thirty seven females with IH and 33 healthy female controls were included in this study. Childhood and present ADHD symptoms of the participants were assessed using the Wender Utah Rating Scale (WURS) and the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS), respectively. The Autism-Spectrum Quotient (AQ) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) were used to assess autistic traits and different aspects of empathy. Hirsutism severity was measured by the Ferriman–Gallwey scoring system.

Results: No significant difference was found between patients and controls on psychiatric questionnaire scores, except for a trend for subjects with IH to show higher levels of school-associated problems than controls according to WURS. The severity of hirsutism was strongly correlated with the WURS irritability subscore and the WURS total score, and moderately correlated with the WURS behavioral problems/impulsivity and attentional deficit subscores.

Conclusions: This study provides preliminary evidence that common etiological factors may be involved in both the development of IH, ADHD, and coexisting disruptive behavioral problems.