



Is neurocognitive functioning linked to a family history of a suicide attempt?

By Dr. Jessica Edwards

Jason Jones and researchers in Philadelphia have studied a subsample of participants from the Philadelphia Neurodevelopmental Cohort to understand whether neurocognitive functioning is associated with a family history of a suicide attempt. Jones *et al.* matched 501 participants (aged 8-21 years) who had a family history of a suicide attempt with ~3,000 participants with no such family history. They then compared measures of neurocognitive function between the two groups.

Those with a family history of a suicide attempt exhibited poorer executive function, attention and language reasoning than those with no family history. The researchers thus consider that further studies are now warranted to investigate whether neurocognitive deficits might serve as an endophenotype for suicide risk. If so, neurocognitive functioning could potentially be targeted in interventions to prevent or treat suicidal behaviours in at-risk youth.

Referring to:

Jones, J.D., Boyd, R.C., Calkins, M.E., Moore, T.M., Ahmed, A., Barzilay, R., Benton, T.D., Gur, R.E. & Gur, R.C. (2020), Association between family history of suicide attempt and neurocognitive functioning in community youth. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatr.* doi: 10.1111/jcpp.13239.

Glossary:

Endophenotype: observable characteristics that are influenced by genes and that contribute to disease vulnerability.