

Executive function improvement upon remission of recurrent unipolar depression

E. Biringer, , A. Lundervold, K. Stordal, A. Mykletun, J. Egeland, R. Bottlender and A. Lund



E. Biringer

Email: eva.biringer@psyk.uib.no

Fax: +4755974419

- (1) Institute of Clinical Medicine, Section of Psychiatry, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- (2) Section of Psychiatry, Haukeland University Hospital, 5021 Bergen, Norway
- (3) Dept. of Biological and Medical Psychology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- (4) Research Centre for Health Promotion, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- (5) Vestfold Mental Health Care Trust, Tønsberg, Norway
- (6) Dept. of Psychiatry, Ludwig-Maximilian University (LMU), Munich, Germany

Abstract: The aim of the study was to investigate the improvement of executive function measures upon recovery from unipolar depression. Thirty patients who suffered from recurrent major unipolar depression were retested with regard to their executive function approximately two years after an initial baseline examination. At baseline, patients were depressed (average 17-item HAM-D score 21.8), at retesting they were partially or totally recovered (average HAM-D score 8.2). There was a significant positive association between improvement on the HAM-D and improvement of executive function. In those with complete recovery, overall executive function and most examined executive function measures were no longer different from the baseline performance of healthy controls (with the possible exception of semantic fluency and Stroop Colour-word). In conclusion, recovery from major unipolar depression was accompanied by a recovery of many aspects of executive function to a normal level. Our findings support previous studies that have shown that neuropsychological impairment associated with long-standing depressive symptomatology is reversible (i. e. state-related) in recurrent unipolar depression.

Key words depression - longitudinal - executive function

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