

The recognition and intensity of moral emotions in the behavioral variant of frontotemporal dementia

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Statement of the Problem: The study of moral emotions is essential for understanding the interactions between cognitive, affective and social processes, as well as for understanding their role as motivators of human social behavior. Neuroimaging studies have implicated frontal and temporal structures in moral cognition, thus behavioral variant of Frontotemporal Dementia (bvFTD) has provided a lesion model essential to investigate the processes involved in moral emotions. **Methodology:** In this study, we aimed to investigate the recognition, intensity and affectation of moral emotions in patients with bvFTD (n=16). We included a control group of patients with Alzheimer's disease (AD, n=18), and healthy controls (n=21). Participants were assessed with a novel task to measure recognition, intensity and affectation of basic and moral emotions. **Findings:** Compared with the AD group and healthy controls, patients with bvFTD obtained significantly lower scores in embarrassment, anger and fear recognition. BvFTD patients also experienced anger and pity with less intensity than both control groups. **Conclusion & Significance:** These results support previous studies in patients with bvFTD showing emotion recognition and moral cognition impairments. These results provide new insights into moral emotions pathways in bvFTD patients that cannot be fully explained by social cognitive and executive functions deficits. Further studies should use neuroimaging techniques in order to correlate atrophy patterns with recognition, intensity and affectation of moral emotions.

Biography

Sandra Baez is professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Los Andes University. She holds a degree in Psychology, a Master in Neuropsychology, and a Ph.D. in Psychology. She conducted her postdoctoral and received training in functional and structural neuroimaging at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences. She has experience in neuropsychological assessment and cognitive stimulation techniques for patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders. Her interests and research experience are focused on neuropsychological aspects as well as neurophysiological and neuroanatomical correlates of social cognition domains in patients with neuropsychiatric disorders. She has more than 50 publications in leading journals, such as Nature Human Behavior, Neurology, Brain, JAMA Neurology, among others. She is Associate Editor of Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Frontiers in Psychiatry, and ad hoc Reviewer for more than 20 journals. She is also part of the Project team taskforce of the Human Affectome Project.

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