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Introduction

Measuring pre-frontal lobe activity is an important although generally overlooked process in diagnostic assessments. In the past, most neuropsychological assessment batteries have been content with using the Halstead Category Test or Wisconsin Card Sorting test to measure "higher order functioning". In fact, some have even used the latter two measures interchangeably despite the fact that they measure quite different functions. This presentation provides a brief overview of the dimensions and measures of executive and frontal lobe brain activity. More specifically, our focus will be on the utility of the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT; Bechara, Damasio & Damasio, 2000) and its unique sensitivity to right orbital frontal lobe dysfunction.

Method/Results

In addition to a task analysis of the IGT, we review the many neuroimaging studies using the IGT as an activation probe. We also discuss the numerous patient groups demonstrating difficulty on this task as well as present a sample case study review using the IGT.

Discussion

The IGT has great utility in general clinical neuropsychological assessment as well as demonstrated usefulness as an activation probe in neuroimaging studies, including QEEG. The IGT is particularly useful in the assessment of individuals with head trauma, attachment disorders, and borderline personality disorders among others.

References

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