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SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER: A VALIDATION STUDY

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Recently, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), has been the focus of intense interest. SAD is a syndrome commonly associated with annually recurrent depressions characterized by hypersomnia, carbohydrate craving and overeating. Hance et al.(1991), recently completed an epidemiological study of the prevalence of SAD in the Bloomington-Normal area. In the Hance et al. study (presented at this conference) 364 people were randomly interviewed using the Seasonal Pattern Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) which was adapted for telephone interviews. In that study, they report a 4.6% prevalence rate of SAD in the general population; this is similar to other recently published reports. The purpose of this study is to provide a measure of external validation for the Hance et al. epidemiological study. Twenty subjects were chosen at random and interviewed in order to establish a detailed psychological profile. Each subject was assessed with: 1. An additional SPAQ, 2. The Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression-SAD Version (Rosenthal et al.), 3. The Structured Clinical Interview for the DSM-III/R (SCID-P, Spitzer et al.). These were administered by three trained interviewers. Four subjects met criteria for disorders diagnosed by the DSM-III/R. One female met criteria for Bipolar Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Adjustment Disorder; she also met the criteria for SAD-winter pattern on both SPAQ administrations. A Spearman rank order correlation coefficient revealed a significant correlation between the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale total scores and the Seasonality scores of the SPAQ ($r = .596$; $P < .005$). Although extrapolation from this data is limited, the results of this external validation study suggest that there is a specific relationship between Seasonal Affective Disorder and Depression. Clearly, future studies are necessary in order to fully delineate Seasonal Affective Disorder in the general population.