

2013

An investigation of mismatch negativity in current and ex-cannabis users using a feature controlled method

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Abstract

Abstract presented at the 23rd Australasian Society for Psychophysiology Conference, 20-22 Nov 2013, Wollongong, Australia

Keywords

cannabis, ex, controlled, current, method, negativity, feature, mismatch, investigation, users

Disciplines

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

Webster, F., Broyd, S., Greenwood, L., Croft, R., Todd, J., Michie, P. T., Johnstone, S., Lee-Bates, B., Coyle, H. & Solowij, N. (2013). An investigation of mismatch negativity in current and ex-cannabis users using a feature controlled method. 23rd Australasian Society for Psychophysiology Conference (p. 65). Wollongong, Australia: Australian Society for Psychophysiology Inc.

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An investigation of mismatch negativity in current and ex- cannabis users using a feature controlled method

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Aims: The Mismatch Negativity (MMN) is a brain event-related potential marker of sensory memory and prediction error. Studies have found reduced MMN amplitude in long-term cannabis users, and in ex-cannabis users, relative to non-user controls. These groups have not been directly compared. A criticism of previous research is a lack of control for perceptual differences between the deviant and standard tone within the oddball sequence of a multifeature paradigm, which may enhance N1 and therefore overestimate MMN. The current study investigated the use of a novel, feature-controlled extraction method to further explore MMN in chronic users, ex-users and controls. **Method:** 39 chronic users, 16 ex-users and 44 non-user controls completed a multi-feature MMN paradigm with duration (100 ms), frequency (1200 Hz) and intensity (90 dB) deviants (deviants 6%; standards 82%, 50 ms, 1000 Hz, 80 dB), with runs preceded by trains of deviants presented as standards. MMN was extracted using (i) the traditional method (deviant – oddball standard) and (ii) a feature-controlled method (deviant – perceptually identical stimuli presented as standards prior to the oddball sequence). **Results:** A main effect of Method type indicated the traditional method produced larger MMN amplitude estimates for all groups and deviant conditions. A main effect of Group was identified for frequency MMN indicating reduced MMN in chronic users compared to controls. In ex-users, frequency MMN was reduced relative to controls using the traditional method, but only at trend level for the feature-controlled method. No differences between chronic and ex-users were identified for any deviant condition with either method. **Conclusions:** Reduced frequency MMN in chronic and 33-month abstinent users suggests chronic use may lead to early sensory information processing deficits that persist after cessation of use. These data demonstrate the utility of a feature-controlled method of examining MMN, and suggest the traditional method may overestimate MMN due to stimulus perceptual differences enhancing N1.

Acknowledgements: This study was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (Project Grant 1007593) and the Australian Research Council (FT110100752).

Keywords: mismatch negativity, Cannabis, feature-controlled method, chronic users, ex-users

doi: 10.3389/conf.fnhum.2013.213.00021

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