

The Clinical Gut: Examining the cognitive processes and neural underpinnings of judgments, feelings of rightness and its impact on information seeking

ABSTRACT:

Background

Decision science research distinguishes between *Intuitive* and *Analytic* processes (Kahneman, 2011). Intuitive processes show more confirmatory hypothesis-testing tendencies due to associative schema-driven processes than analytic processes which may lead to different judgment outcomes. Yet, research aiming to understand whether, when and how clinical psychologists use intuition in their clinical judgments is scarce (e.g., Jacinto et al., 2018).

Aims

The present research seeks to understand whether and how clinical intuitive processes lead to confirmatory processing about others with mental illness and psychological suffering and how this impacts personality impressions and mental illness stigma.

Method

This research puts forth a conceptual model, guided by an interdisciplinary integration of clinical psychology, decision sciences and neuropsychology. Through experimental paradigms, using both behavioral and neural methods, we explore conditions that promote the use of intuitive confirmatory processing.

Results

The results from 19 studies indicate that 1) when clinicians are asked to segment the information diagnosis judgments are less confirmatory than when they process information as a whole; 2) psychological disorder diagnosis does not lead to adjustments of spontaneous trait; 3) a psychological cause for suffering reduces perceived competence, morality and the likelihood to grant euthanasia.

Conclusions

Intuitive confirmatory tendencies guide clinical judgments. Whether information is processed holistically or step-by-step leads to rely more or less in intuitive processes. There is an intuitive conflation between personality and psychological disorder. Mental illness stigma affects judgements and decisions about people in psychological suffering.

Keywords

Clinical Decision Making, Intuition, Confirmation Bias, Mental illness stigma

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Published Work:

Jacinto, S., Lewis, C., Braga, J., & Scott, K. (2018). A conceptual model for generating and validating in-session clinical judgments. *Psychotherapy Research*, 28(1), 91-105. doi: 10.1080/10503307.2016.1169329

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