Clinical characteristics and brain PET findings in 3 cases of dissociative amnesia : Disproportionate retrograde devicit and posterior middle temporal gyrus hypometabolism

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Résumé en anglais	Background Precipitated by psychological stress, dissociative amnesia occurs in the absence of identifiable brain damage. Its clinical characteristics and functional neural basis are still a matter of controversy. Methods In the present paper, we report 3 cases of retrograde autobiographical amnesia, characterized by an acute onset concomitant with emotional/neurological precipitants. We present 2 cases of dissociative amnesia with fugue (cases 1 and 2), and one case of focal dissociative amnesia after a minor head trauma (case 3). The individual case histories and neuropsychological characteristics are reported, as well as the whole-brain voxel-based 18FDG-PET metabolic findings obtained at group-level in comparison to 15 healthy subjects. Results All patients suffered from autobiographical memory loss, in the absence of structural lesion. They had no significant impairment of anterograde memory or of executive function. Impairment of autobiographical memory was complete for two of the three patients, with loss of personal identity (cases 1 and 2). A clinical recovery was found for the two patients in whom follow-up was available (cases 2 and 3). Voxel-based group analysis highlighted a metabolic impairment of the right posterior middle temporal gyrus. 18FDG-PET was repeated in case 3, and showed a complete functional brain recovery. Conclusion The situation of dissociative amnesia with disproportionate retrograde amnesia is clinically heterogeneous between individuals. Our findings may suggest that impairment of high-level integration of visual and/or emotional information processing involving dysfunction of the right posterior middle temporal gyrus could reduce triggering of multi-modal visual memory traces, thus impeding reactivation of aversive memories.
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