

Project “BDD-VITAC - Visual and tactile body representation in body dysmorphic disorder”

Body dysmorphic disorder is a mental disorder which is characterized by being preoccupied with a specific aspect of one’s appearance. Individuals with BDD perceive this aspect as ugly or deformed, whereas it is unnoticeable or only slightly noticeable to others. This mismatch implied that the mental representation of certain body parts is distorted in individuals with BDD.

Body representations can be distinguished between different dimensions, e.g. their functions and sensory modalities. Well-understood is that individuals with BDD experience negative feelings and attitudes towards their own appearance and thus a distortion of the cognitive-affective body image. Little is known about other body representations in BDD, such as the perceptual body image and the body schema. Accordingly, psychotherapy of BDD focuses on these cognitive-affective processes. However, remission rates of less than 40% show the need for improvements.

In the project BDD-VITAC, we experimentally assess the perceptual body image and the body schema in individuals with BDD, based on visual and tactile information. Specifically, we aim to investigate, which body representations are distorted and whether individuals with BDD differ from mentally healthy individuals and also from individuals with a high level of body dissatisfaction with regard to these body representations.

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