

MEETING ABSTRACT

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# Increased attention for negative life events is associated with an elevated risk for premenstrual symptoms

Xenia Gonda<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Konstantinos Fountoulakis<sup>3</sup>, Gabor Csukly<sup>4</sup>, Tamas Telek<sup>2</sup>, Dorottya Pap<sup>2</sup>, Zoltan Rihmer<sup>1</sup>, Gyorgy Bagdy<sup>2</sup>

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## Background

The majority of healthy women experience some degree of fluctuation of mood and physical phenomena paralleling their reproductive cycle. While in most women this doesn't significantly interfere with everyday functioning in a smaller portion of women it causes distress severe enough to seek medical help. Earlier it has been found that premenstrual syndromes show an association with perceived stress. However, we hypothesise that even in healthy women, the experience of more severe symptoms in the late luteal phase of the menstrual cycle is related to the perception of life events. The aim of our study was to investigate the association between severity of late luteal phase symptoms and perception of positive and negative life events in a sample of healthy women.

## Materials and methods

88 healthy women not meeting criteria for any DSM-IV premenstrual phase-associated disorders completed the PRISM calendar for three consecutive menstrual cycles. Subjects also completed the Objective and Subjective Event Checklist during the follicular phase of the first cycle. Association between PRISM score change from the follicular through the late luteal phase and life event variables were investigated using Generalized Linear Model Analysis (GENMOD).

## Results

The PRISM score change showed a significant positive association with the ratio of positive subjective life

events and a significant positive association with the ratio of negative subjective life events. We found no significant association in case of the objective life events.

## Conclusions

The results of our study indicate that women manifesting a more marked increase of symptoms during the late luteal phase of the menstrual cycle are more likely to notice negative subjective life events and less likely to notice positive subjective life events. However, there was no difference in the number of positive and negative objective life events observed. This suggests a constant, trait-like negative bias in the perception of life events present throughout the whole reproductive cycle which may play an important role in the emergence of premenstrual symptoms.

## Author details

<sup>1</sup>Department of Clinical and Theoretical Mental Health, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. <sup>2</sup>Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacotherapy, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. <sup>3</sup>3rd Department of Psychiatry, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. <sup>4</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary.

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Clinical and Theoretical Mental Health, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary