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## The effects of oxytocin on social cognition and behaviour in frontotemporal dementia.

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### Abstract

Patients with behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia demonstrate abnormalities in behaviour and social cognition, including deficits in emotion recognition. Recent studies suggest that the neuropeptide oxytocin is an important mediator of social behaviour, enhancing prosocial behaviours and some aspects of emotion recognition across species. The objective of this study was to assess the effects of a single dose of intranasal oxytocin on neuropsychiatric behaviours and emotion processing in patients with behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia. In a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized cross-over design, 20 patients with behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia received one dose of 24 IU of intranasal oxytocin or placebo and then completed emotion recognition tasks known to be affected by frontotemporal dementia and by oxytocin. Caregivers completed validated behavioural ratings at 8 h and 1 week following drug administrations. A significant improvement in scores on the Neuropsychiatric Inventory was observed on the evening of oxytocin administration compared with placebo and compared with baseline ratings. Oxytocin was also associated with reduced recognition of angry facial expressions by patients with behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia. Together these findings suggest that oxytocin is a potentially promising, novel symptomatic treatment candidate for patients with behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia and that further study of this neuropeptide in frontotemporal dementia is warranted.

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