

Poster presentation

Autobiographical memory in multiple sclerosis

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Background

The nature of remote-memory impairment in patients with multiple sclerosis is the subject of some debate. While some investigators have found that semantic autobiographical memories were significantly impaired, others suggest that memory for episodic autobiographical incidents was more affected than for personal semantic information.

The objective of the study is to assess autobiographical memory in patients with multiple sclerosis.

Materials and methods

Eighteen patients with clinically definite multiple sclerosis (6 males and 12 females, with a mean of 41 years of age and 11.3 years of education) were compared to sixteen healthy, age and education matched, controls (6 males and 10 females, with a mean of 36.1 years of age and 13.2 years of education). Autobiographical memory was assessed by the Autobiographical Memory Interview, which measures personal semantic and episodic memories from different time periods – childhood, early adulthood and the recent past – permitting examination of the possible differential effects of brain damage on these two types of autobiographical memory. All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS.

Results

Patients performed significantly worse than controls on the subscales of the AMI questionnaire ($p < 0.01$). There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups on the early adulthood episodic memories. Sex and duration of the disease had no significant impact on the patient's performance.

Discussion

The present results indicate that both components of autobiographical memory are affected in multiple sclerosis, with personal semantic memories being more impaired.