

Poster presentation

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Cognitive dysfunction in multiple sclerosis: a clinical perspective of neuropsychological investigations

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Background

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic inflammatory demyelination disease that can affect cognitive and emotional functioning. Neuropsychological investigations have demonstrated that cognitive disorders are common (45–65%) in patients with multiple sclerosis. Memory, attention, executive function and information processing speed are the most commonly reported impaired aspects of cognition.

Materials and methods

In this paper we review the current state of knowledge regarding cognitive and psychiatric features of multiple sclerosis and relate these findings to neuropathological changes.

Results

Cognitive and psychiatric disorders have long been described in MS. About 50% of MS patients present some degree of neuropsychological impairment. MS can manifest as a neuropsychiatry disturbance even in the absence of physical disabilities. Patients with MS who have cognitive impairment most commonly display deficits in the cognitive domains of memory, learning, attention and information processing. In diagnosing cognitive dysfunction in a patient with MS, it is important first to recognize and treat the common co morbidities of fatigue and depression. However, these symptoms were only well evaluated starting about fifteen years ago. More recently, there has been renewed interest in cognitive and psychiatric assessment in MS, especially due to the emergence of new therapies for the disease.

Discussion

Cognitive dysfunction is a major cause of disability in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). Due to its onset in young adulthood (a period of life in which the individual is professionally and socially very active) the presence of cognitive impairment may greatly alter the patient's daily living activities and future life plans.