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Social cognition deficits in patients with mild Alzheimer's disease

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Social Cognition (SC) deficits have been studied in various neuropsychiatric disorders like autism and schizophrenia. It has been noted that these deficits are related to psychopathology and the symptom profile like disorganization, hallucinations, hostility and the level of functioning in these disorders. This study aimed to compare the social cognition (SC) abilities of patients with mild-stage Alzheimer's disease (AD) and matched healthy controls and to investigate its relationship with symptoms and functioning. We compared SC and neurocognition abilities of patients with the mild AD (n=20) and healthy controls (n=20) and measured the level of functioning in patients. The difference in SC scores of patients and controls became insignificant after considering the role of neurocognitive decline in the AD. The SC performance had a trend level correlation with performance in instrumental ADL. We could not find any significant correlations of the NPI scores with the deficits in SC. However, we found a trend level correlation of SC scores with performance in instrumental ADL in patients. The interaction of neurocognitive domains like executive function and memory would influence the performance of SC testing in dementia patients. The SC deficits might contribute to the level of functional impairment in dementia patients. But its relationship with neuropsychiatric symptoms needs further investigations and clarity. Future studies in this area need to address the limitations of the current and previous studies with larger sample sizes, prospective design and more comprehensive measures to assess the impact of SC decline in patients with dementia.

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