Personality traits and behavioral and psychological symptoms in patients at an early stage of Alzheimer’s disease

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Abstract

Objective: The origins of behavioral and psychological symptoms (BPS) in Alzheimer’s disease (AD) are still poorly understood. Focusing on individual personality structure we explored the relationship between premorbid personality and its changes over 5 years, and BPS in patients at early stage of AD.

Method: A total of 54 patients at early stage of AD according to ICD-10 and NINCDS-ADRDA criteria and 64 control subjects were included. Family members filled in the Neuropsychiatric Inventory Questionnaire to evaluate their proxies’ current BPS and the NEO Personality Inventory Revised twice, the first time to evaluate the participants’ current personality and the second time to assess personality traits as they were remembered to be 5 years earlier.

Results: Behavioral and psychological symptoms, in particular apathy, depression, anxiety, and agitation are frequent occurrences in early stage AD. Premorbid personality differed between AD patients and normal control, but it was not predictive of BPS was not predictive in patients with AD. Personality traits clearly change in the course of beginning AD, and this change seems to develop in parallel with BPS as early change signs of AD.

Conclusions: Premorbid personality was not associated with BPS in early stage of AD, although complex and non-linear relationships between the two are not excluded. However, both personality and behavioral changes occur early in the course of AD, and recognizing them as possible, early warning signs of neurodegenerescence may prove to be a key factor for early detection and intervention.