

Longitudinal Changes in Awareness over 36 months in Patients with Mild Alzheimer's disease

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Background: The aim was to investigate changes in awareness in patients with mild Alzheimer's disease over 36 months and to study if longitudinal changes in awareness were associated with changes in cognition and neuropsychiatric symptoms. **Methods:** A categorical awareness scale was applied in 95 patients with mild AD (age \geq 50 years, MMSE score \geq 20). Awareness was rated at baseline and at 12 and 36 months. MMSE, Neuropsychiatric Inventory (NPI-Q) and Cornell scale for Depression in Dementia was also administered at all visits. **Results:** At 12 months, 26% had lower awareness rating as compared to baseline, and 16% had higher awareness rating. At 36 months lower awareness ratings were found in 39% and higher ratings in 16 % as compared to baseline. Patients with lower awareness at 36 months as compared to baseline had a more rapid decline in MMSE score ($p=0.003$) and a more rapid increase in NPI-Q score ($p = 0.002$) over 36 months as compared to patients with stable or improved awareness over 36 months. Change from baseline in awareness rating at 12 months was not associated with cognitive decline or more neuropsychiatric symptoms. **Conclusions:** Despite a significant cognitive decline over three years awareness remained stable or even improved in many patients with mild AD. There seems to be no direct association between cognitive decline and lower awareness, but our findings suggests that there is a more rapid increase in cognitive deficits and neuropsychiatric symptoms in the group of mild AD patients with lower awareness ratings at three years as compared to baseline.