THESES

COMPARISON OF COMMUNICATION ABILITIES IN LATE ONSET DEPRESSION AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE (ABSTRACT)*. THESIS. SAO PAULO, 2009.

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Introduction: Depression and dementia are very prevalent in the elderly. An inherent component of AD is impairment in linguistic communication. Language impairment can also be found in depressed patients. The Arizona Battery for Communication Disorders of Dementia (ABCD) is a clinical instrument designed to identify and quantify functional linguistic communication deficits in dementia and also provides information about other cognitive functions, as orientation, memory, and visuospatial abilities.

Objective: The aim of this study was to verify the performance of healthy elderly, depressed elderly and mild AD patients and to compare the profiles of communication abilities in these groups.

Method: We studied 25 patients with late onset depression (mean age 73.6 (6.6); schooling: 9.1 (5.7)) and 30 patients with mild (CDR=1) AD (mean age 77.6 (5.4); schooling: 7.5 (7.1)) using the ABCD.

Results: The performance of both groups was also compared to a control group of 30 healthy subjects (mean age 73.8 (5.8); schooling: 9.1 (5.4)). Mild AD patients showed worse performance than normal subjects in all tasks, while depressed patients had intermediary scores than controls and AD in most tasks.

Conclusion: Depressed patients performed significantly worse than normal subjects in Linguistic Expression and in ABCD total score.

Key words: Alzheimer's disease, language, depression, cognition, elderly.

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