Alzheimer’s Disease Progression and Stages

Alzheimer's Disease Neuropsychology · https://neuro.vip/neuropsychology/neuropsychology-of-alzheimers-disease/alzheimers-disease-progression-and-stages/

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

- MCI is a condition that is considered to be a **transitional stage** between normal aging and dementia.
- People with MCI may experience **memory problems and other cognitive difficulties** that are noticeable but **do not significantly interfere with their daily activities**.
- MCI does not meet the criteria for a diagnosis of dementia, as individuals **can still function independently**.
- However, individuals with MCI are at an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia.
- Important: **MCI does not necessarily transition into Alzheimer's Disease**. A large proportion of those diagnosed with MCI have a non-degenerative reason for the impairment and go on to improve/recover.

Mild Alzheimer Disease

- Mild Alzheimer's disease is the early stage of the disease and typically lasts for several years.
- During this stage, individuals **may still be able to function independently and perform their daily activities**, such as dressing and bathing, but may start experiencing memory lapses more frequently.
- Other symptoms may include difficulty finding words, getting lost in familiar places, and changes in mood or personality.
- While memory impairment is evident, it is usually the **short-term memory that is affected the most**.

Moderate Alzheimer Disease

- Moderate Alzheimer's disease is the middle stage and can last for several years.
- Individuals in this stage will experience **more pronounced memory loss and cognitive decline**, making it **increasingly difficult for them to perform routine tasks independently**.
- They may struggle with language, have difficulty recognizing family and friends, and exhibit behavioral changes like agitation or wandering.
- Assistance with activities of daily living, such as dressing, eating, and personal hygiene, may be required.

Severe Alzheimer Disease

- Severe Alzheimer's disease is the **final stage** of the disease and can last for a few years or more.
- Individuals in this stage will have **severe memory loss and cognitive impairment**. They will be **completely dependent** on others for care.
- They may lose the ability to communicate, have difficulty swallowing, and experience **significant physical and functional decline**.
- In the later stages, individuals may become bedridden and require round-the-clock care.

Alzheimer Disease Variants and Stage Differences

The above are **broad stages** of Alzheimer's disease progression. Keep in mind that **progression is not exactly the same for every person** and that an individual may exhibit aspects of multiple stages at the same time. It's also important to note that there are **different variants of Alzheimer's disease**. The most common is the **amnestic (memory) variant** and so most commentaries focus more on this. However, the **language** and **posterior** variants may need to be considered and their staging may differ somewhat from the below (especially where memory is concerned).