

ANXIETY IN MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT: A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE COGNITIVE DECLINE IN ALL STAGES OF MCI?

G. Sinoff^{1,2} P. Werner²

¹*Carmel Medical Center, Haifa* ²*Department of Gerontology, Faculty of Social Welfare & health Sciences, Haifa, Israel*

Since dementia is a major societal burden, if one could delay this decline the savings would be significant. Finding predictors for dementia is of the highest priority; however most physicians have limited access to biomarkers or neuroimaging and tend to rely on clinical predictors. Mood disorders often accompany memory loss and depression has been shown to precede dementia, but there are few studies regarding anxiety. In my previous community study, anxiety accompanying memory loss had a 3.96 relative risk for developing cognitive decline. In this longitudinal 2-year study, anxiety in MCI was investigated as a predictor of future cognitive decline. All 101 participants had a comprehensive neuropsychological cognitive assessment, to fulfill the criteria for MCI. In the cohort, 36% had anxiety, many of whom also had slightly higher levels of depression compared to those without anxiety. After one year, 73% with anxiety and 64% without anxiety showed cognitive decline and after 2 years, another 62% showed cognitive decline. Survival analysis showed a trend for those with anxiety to present more with cognitive decline and conversion to dementia, but neither was statistically significant. Theoretically, persons in the community are at Braak's stage I/II with impaired flow to the hippocampus via the entorhinal cortex, with hyperactivity of the alternative amygdala pathway. However, with MCI (stage III /IV), flow via the amygdala is now also impaired. In conclusion, anxiety was prominent in persons with MCI, but did not predict future cognitive decline, perhaps since persons with late MCI actually have early dementia.