

NEUROCOGNITIVE DYSFUNCTIONS IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

P. Calabrese

Memory Clinic, Department of Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neurology, University Clinic of Neurology, Faculty of Medicine, Ruhr-University Bochum, Bochum, Germany

Cognitive and psychiatric dysfunctions are known to affect about 50 % of MS-patients. Only few studies have commented on these deficits when reporting neurological benefits in modern immunomodulating medications. Since mental disturbances have been recognized to have a significant impact on everyday activities there is a strong need to develop cognitive tests to assess neuropsychological functioning in MS.

The talk is aimed to give an overview of the main findings on neuropsychiatric disturbances in MS. The pros and cons of considering the cognitive deficits of multiple sclerosis patients as a form of 'subcortical dementia' are also discussed. Finally, by comparing the neuropsychological descriptions of multiple sclerosis patients as given in the literature to other neurological diseases which are also associated with neuropsychological deficiencies, the term 'multiple disconnection syndrome' is proposed to describe the variety of neuropsychological deficits encountered in this disease. Furthermore, a 'threshold of cerebral tolerance' is assumed which must be crossed before cognitive dysfunctions are manifested clinically