Depressive Symptoms Following Stroke and TIA: Is it Time for a More Intensive
Treatment Approach? Results from the TABASCO Cohort Study

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Objective: To examine whether depressive symptoms after a stroke or a TIA, increase the risk of cognitive impairment and functional deterioration on a two year follow-up.

Method: Participants were survivors of first-ever, mild-moderate ischemic stroke or TIA from the TABASCO prospective cohort study, who underwent a 3T MRI, and were examined by a multi-professional team 6, 12 and 24 months after the event, using direct interviews, depression scales and neurological, neuropsychological, and functional evaluations. The main outcome was the development of cognitive impairment.

Results: Data were obtained from 306 consecutive eligible patients (mean age: 67.1±10.0 years), who were admitted to the department of emergency medicine at the Tel-Aviv Medical Center between April 1 2008 to December 1 2011, within 72-hours from onset of symptoms of TIA or stroke. Of these patients, 51 (16.7%) developed cognitive impairment during a two year follow-up. Multivariate regression analysis showed that a Geriatric Depression Score (GDS) 6 at admission and at 6 months after the event, were significant independent markers of cognitive impairment 2 years after the stroke/TIA (OR= 3.62, 95% CI:1.01-13; OR=3.68, 95% Cl: 1.03-13.21, respectively). Higher GDS scores at 6 months were also related to a worse functional outcome (p0.001).

Conclusions: Our results support depression screening among stroke and TIA survivors as a tool to identify patients who are prone to have a worse cognitive and functional outcome. These patients may benefit from closer medical surveillance and a more intensive treatment approach.