

Carers' Views On Language Decline And Early Detection Of Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Focus Group Discussion

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Deficits beyond literal and everyday language usage present early in Alzheimer’s disease (AD) trajectory. Language assessment involving the **comprehension of figurative language** may be a **sensitive approach** able to identify subtle AD related deficits at the early stage of mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

INTRODUCTION	METHODS	RESULTS	CONCLUSIONS	REFERENCES
MCI involves cognitive deficits whilst maintaining functional independence and is considered an intermediate stage between normal ageing and dementia (Tangalos & Petersen, 2018). AD is the leading cause of dementia, and language deficits appear early in its trajectory (Oksuz et al., 2024). Sentence repetition, naming and verbal fluency are used to assess and detect language and related deficits (Talar & Philip, 2008). Growing evidence suggests the greater sensitivity of other language measures than current strategies (Klooster et al., 2021; Kokje et al., 2021). This study aims to gather lived experience accounts of early language and related changes in the AD trajectory towards the detection of early of MCI.	A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with close family members/carers of individuals living/lived with AD. Participants were recruited from the Join Dementia Research platform which host individuals interested in dementia research across the UK. The FGD was held in two groups of 4 and 5 participants respectively lasting between 80-90 minutes. Recordings from the discussion were transcribed to text and analysed inductively using Braun & Clark (2021) thematic analysis approach. Data was read through repeatedly, relevant thoughts and codes were generated and grouped to form themes, an iterative process was applied to ensure themes captured the important elements within the data and a final write up involving an evaluation and interpretation of the themes.	Three major themes (T) were generated from the FGD T1 Markers: Language decline was identified years before diagnosis. Decline was noted in the ability to engage in meaningful conversation, significant simplification, and greater difficulty comprehending meaning and concepts. T2 Barriers: Lack of awareness of normal ageing versus AD related deficits, insufficient family involvement in assessment processes and reduced sensitivity of current assessment strategies to identifying early deficits. T3 Recommendations: Routine cognitive and person- centered testing able to monitor and identify language and related changes from a previous performance that differentiates from normal ageing.	Findings from the FGD highlight important deficits at the preclinical and prodromal stages of the AD trajectory and the need for sensitive approaches toward early detection. - Deficits beyond literal and everyday language usage present early in the AD trajectory. - Figurative language (FL) includes metaphors, idioms, proverbs, and sarcasm, where the intended meaning differs from the literal words used. FL comprehension draws on multiple cognitive domains and has shown greater discriminative ability between healthy older adults and MCIs (Klooster et al., 2021; Chakrabarty et al., 2023). - FL assessment may be a sensitive approach to early detection for AD related deficits.	Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? <i>Qualitative Research in Psychology</i>, 18(3), 328–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238 Chakrabarty, M., Klooster, N., Biswas, A., & Chatterjee, A. (2023). The scope of using pragmatic language tests for early detection of dementia: A systematic review of investigations using figurative language. <i>Alzheimer's & Dementia</i>, 19(10), e705–e728. https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13369 Klooster, N., Humphries, S., Cardillo, E., Hartung, F., Xie, L., Das, S., Yushkevich, P., Piliavin, A., Wang, J., Wolk, D. A., & Chatterjee, A. (2021). Sensitive Measures of Cognition in Mild Cognitive Impairment. <i>Journal of Alzheimer's Disease</i>, 82(3), 1123–1136. https://doi.org/10.3233/JAD-201280 Kokje, E., Celik, S., Wahl, H.-W., & von Stutterheim, C. (2022). Can discourse processing performance serve as an early marker of Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment? A systematic review of text comprehension. <i>European Journal of Ageing</i>, 39(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-021-00619-5 Oksuz, N., Ghouri, R., Taydelen, B., Uludüz, D., & Özte, A. (2024). Mild Cognitive Impairment Progression and Alzheimer's Disease Risk: A Comprehensive Analysis of 3553 Cases over 203 Months. <i>Journal of Clinical Medicine</i>, 13(2), Article 516. https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm13020516 Talar, V., & Phillips, N. A. (2008). Language performance in Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment: A comparative review. <i>Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology</i>, 30(5), 501–506. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803390701550126 Tangalos, E. G., & Petersen, R. C. (2018). Mild Cognitive Impairment in Geriatrics. <i>Clinics in Geriatric Medicine</i>, 34(4), 563–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cger.2018.06.005
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