Role of social cognition deficits as diagnostic marker in neurodegenerative disease

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The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5), stresses social cognition as a stand-alone domain of functional decline in neurocognitive disorders (NCDs). Nevertheless, changes in social cognition and behaviour are not systematically investigated in clinical practice, and there is no clear consensus on the relevant subdomains to assess. Furthermore, there is a lack of reliable, valid, and clinically suitable measures, as social cognitive instruments developed from a research perspective are seldom introduced into clinical practice. In the first part of the talk, we will briefly review social cognitive deficits in NCDs, with a main focus on the behavioural variant of frontotemporal dementia. Then, the available evidence on the clinical validity of social cognition tasks in the early and differential diagnosis will be discussed, as well as the major limitations in the field. Finally, we will present a new collaborative international Consortium for the definition of the "clinical use of SocIal coGNnition measures for the AssessmenT of neURocognitivE disorders'' (SIGNATURE Initiative) involving methodologists, experts, clinicians and stakeholders. The Initiative roadmap includes different phases towards the effective assessment of social cognition in clinical practice, including the definition of clinical needs and consortium recommendations on research priorities. SIGNATURE represents the first international initiative tapping into the real-context of memory clinics to define the best implementation strategy for the use of social cognition tasks in harmonized neuropsychological batteries.

References

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