

Progression of BPSD is different in early vs late onset svPPA: A retrospective study

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State of the art: The impact of age at onset on behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) has been explored in behavioral frontotemporal dementia and Alzheimer's disease, but not in the semantic variant of primary progressive aphasia (svPPA), where BPSD are frequent and represent a major concern for families. This study explored the progression of BPSD in early vs late onset svPPA.

Methodology: We performed a retrospective chart review in a large cohort of deceased svPPA patients with early (<65 yo; EO; n=10; M=59.5 yo) vs. late onset (LO; n=9; M= 70.9 yo) of disease. Symptoms of BPSD were assessed via consensus by three experienced raters based on eight time points before death.

Results: Depression, apathy and hyperorality were less prevalent in the EO group. Progression of depression, rituals, hyperorality and psychotic symptoms was similar in both groups, whereas anxiety peaked one year later in EO. Apathy only appeared in later stages in EO whereas it increased gradually in LO. On the contrary, irritability decreased in later stages in EO whereas an increase was observed in LO. Finally, the prevalence of disinhibition and agitation increased three to four years earlier in EO.

Conclusion: These preliminary findings indeed suggest a different mosaic of symptoms in early vs. late svPPA as disease progresses. EO was associated with earlier prevalence of disinhibition and agitation but less depression and apathy. This has significant counseling implications for patients and families. Further studies are needed to better understand the underlying etiopathological mechanisms of these results.

Conflicts of interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.