

Disparities in frequency of neuropsychiatric symptoms in black and white individuals

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State of the art:

Neuropsychiatric symptoms are highly prevalent in behavioral variant frontotemporal degeneration (bvFTD) and primary progressive aphasia (PPA). Prior work suggests disparities in the clinical presentation of dementia across black and white individuals. The present study is the first, to our knowledge, to investigate disparities in neuropsychiatric symptoms in individuals with a clinical diagnosis of frontotemporal degeneration (FTD).

Methodology:

Using National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center (NACC) data, we evaluated 64 non-Hispanic Black and 2378 White participants with a clinical diagnosis of FTD (bvFTD or PPA) and compared their demographic characteristics, dementia severity and neuropsychiatric symptoms at initial NACC visit. We examined differences in Clinical Dementia Rating Scale (CDR) and Neuropsychiatric Inventory (NPI) in participants with bvFTD (Black, n=38; White, n=1230) and PPA (Black, n=26; White n=1148) using multivariable linear and logistic regression models, covarying for age at visit, disease duration, sex, and education. Models evaluating differences in neuropsychiatric symptoms, additionally controlled for dementia severity.

Results:

Black individuals were considerably underrepresented, comprising only 2.6% of the total sample. In comparison to white individuals, black individuals had a higher degree of dementia severity on CDR at initial visit (CDR sum of boxes; $p=0.05$; CDR global, $p=0.01$), more delusions ($p=0.02$), agitation ($p=0.03$) and depression ($p=0.02$). White individuals were more likely to demonstrate apathy ($p=0.02$).

Conclusion:

Preliminary evidence suggests disparities in dementia severity and neuropsychiatric presentations at onset between black and white individuals with FTD. Future work must address disparities in FTD and the social determinants that drive them to identify appropriate interventions.

Conflicts of interest

No relevant conflicts of interest.