OBJECTIVES

Cognitive impairment is frequently encountered in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). However, there is conflicting evidence with respect to the proportion of patients suffering from cognitive impairment. Cognition comprises multiple domains as memory, working memory, attention and problem solving. If one of these domains is affected, it has an impact on everyday functioning as working, driving, adhering to a treatment or maintaining social contacts. This may also influence the quality of life. We assessed the frequency of cognitive impairment in an unselected group of outpatients with MS and further studied the relationship to life quality.

METHODS

We present an interim analysis on data of an ongoing longitudinal study in outpatients of 12 neurological outpatient services in Germany. Sociodemographic data, current medication, depression and fatigue by clinical impression, severity of disease by EDSS and life quality by Short Form Health Survey (SF-12) were assessed. Cognitive performance was studied by means of the computer-based Memory and Attention Test (MAT).

RESULTS

The interim analysis was performed in 67 patients (54 women and 13 men) at ages from 22 to 69 years (mean ± SD: 43 ± 11 years), with an average EDSS score of 4.4 (± 2.1) and a mean duration of illness of 8.7 years (± 7.6 years). Of these patients, 13% had an impairment in episodic working memory, 28% in episodic short term memory and 9% in selective attention. Impairment was established as a percent rank of less than 16. According to the SF-12, 37% of the patients had an impaired physical health and 36% an impaired psychological health. Attention, physical health and severity of disease were found to correlate significantly with each other. Patients with a better attentional capacity had a better physical health and a lower EDSS Score.

CONCLUSION

These data suggests that MS influences many cognitive domains. But it shows also that there is an intercorrelation between the severity of disease, physical quality of life and the cognitive domain attention. Having an impaired attention may predict a lower physical life quality.

DISCLOSURE

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