Subjective cognitive impairment (SCI) is characterized as a person experiencing cognitive impairments such as forgetfulness, but appearing clinically normal on standard cognitive assessments. Approximately one-quarter to one-half of older adults are believed to have SCI. Unfortunately, neuropsychological tests are often unable to determine for whom SCI represents the very early stages of dementia. Such tests also fail to characterize the full range of impairments that can occur in SCI. As a result, tests of other aspects of brain function, including fundamental levels of processing such as attention, are being investigated in SCI. The aim of this study is to inform the development of more sensitive and specific tests of attention in relation to ageing in the first instance, with later application to the study of SCI and the development of dementia. The study intends to translate people's real-life experience of attention into the development of more ecologically valid, clinically useful and objective test of attention. The study is cross-sectional and aims to recruit 26 younger adults and 26 older adults. This qualitative and objective research approach will examine the relationship between objective-computer-based measures of attentional function and the general public's understanding and experience of attention. Such information will be gathered by means of focus groups and the administration of computer-based attention tests. Results are pending. This research will lead to a greater understanding of the disease process and the development of interventional strategies (such as the technology/computer monitoring of attention/awareness) designed to reduce the personal and societal burden of Alzheimer's disease.

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