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Driving Behavior in patients with MCI/mild Dementia

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Driving is a multimodal activity that integrates a variety of cognitive resources and is associated with higher self-esteem and increased quality of life. Research evidence from on-road and driving simulator studies demonstrate that persons with mild dementia often make driving errors and are involved in road fatalities although certain patients may retain adequate driving skills. Existing literature for MCI patients is sparse and does not indicate a consistently worse overall driving performance in comparison to healthy drivers. Most studies have demonstrated only moderate relationships between cognitive performance and driving ability. Thus, an individualized approach that integrates both the administration of neuropsychological scales as well as a comprehensive neurological assessment is needed. Our current research focuses at the exploration of driving behaviour in individuals with MCI/mild Dementia by applying a driving simulator experiment. Our findings suggest that certain measures of motor coordination and cognition (i.e. working memory, visuospatial memory, information processing speed and psychomotor vigilance) could serve as predictors on a variety of driving indexes (i.e accident risk, reaction time, average driving speed, lateral position). Additionally, quality of sleep and depressive symptomatology seem to be useful predictors of driving behavior in drivers with MCI. Driving under the effect of distractors (i.e. use of mobile phone or conversing with a passenger) significantly affects driving performance of individuals with MCI. Finally, according to our results patients with MCI and mild AD present significant difficulties to accurately estimate their driving performance in comparison to a group of healthy elderly drivers.

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