

## NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

## Remote and unsupervised monitoring of episodic memory decline in patients with prodromal Alzheimer's disease

Sarah E. Polk<sup>1</sup> | Lindsay R Clark<sup>2,3,4</sup> | Kristin E Basche<sup>2</sup> | Luca Kleineidam<sup>5,6</sup> |  
Wenzel Glanz<sup>1</sup> | Michaela Butryn<sup>1</sup> | Robert Perneczky<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> |  
Katharina Buerger<sup>9,11</sup> | Klaus Fliessbach<sup>5,6</sup> | Christoph Laske<sup>12,13</sup> |  
Annika Spottke<sup>6,14</sup> | Anja Schneider<sup>5,6</sup> | Jens Wiltfang<sup>15,16,17</sup> | Stefan J. Teipel<sup>18,19</sup> |  
Michael Wagner<sup>5,6</sup> | Sterling C Johnson<sup>20</sup> | Frank Jessen<sup>6,21,22</sup> | Emrah Düzel<sup>1,23</sup> |  
David Berron<sup>1,24,25</sup>

<sup>1</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Magdeburg, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Division of Geriatrics, Department of Medicine, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, WI, USA

<sup>3</sup>Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, WI, USA

<sup>4</sup>Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center, William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, Madison, WI, USA

<sup>5</sup>Department of Old Age Psychiatry and Cognitive Disorders, University Hospital Bonn and University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

<sup>6</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Bonn, Germany

<sup>7</sup>Ageing Epidemiology (AGE) Research Unit, School of Public Health, Imperial College London, London, UK

<sup>8</sup>Munich Cluster for Systems Neurology (SyNergy), Munich, Germany

<sup>9</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Munich, Germany

<sup>10</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Hospital, LMU Munich, Munich, Germany

<sup>11</sup>Institute for Stroke and Dementia Research (ISD), University Hospital, LMU, Munich, Germany

<sup>12</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Tübingen, Germany

## Abstract

**Background:** Traditional pen-and-paper neuropsychological assessments are not sensitive to subtle cognitive changes in the earliest stages of Alzheimer's disease (AD), limiting their use for monitoring of cognitive performance over shorter timeframes. Here, we show that frequently administered remote and unsupervised digital cognitive assessments are better suited to capture short-term cognitive decline in early AD.

**Method:** We investigated episodic memory trajectories using self-administered remote digital testing in 202 participants (52–85 years) who completed unsupervised tests for at least 30 weeks. Linear mixed modeling was used to investigate main effects of cognitive status,  $n = 152$  cognitively unimpaired (CU),  $n = 50$  with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), and interaction effects of cognitive status by time spent in the study. Analyses were repeated, stratifying the MCI group by amyloid- $\beta$  ( $A\beta$ ) burden ( $n_{A\beta-} = 21$ ,  $n_{A\beta+} = 24$ ). Baseline and change-change associations with in-person neuropsychological assessments were also examined using Pearson correlations.

**Result:** At baseline, MCI performed worse than CU on an associative memory task (Object-in-Room Recall, ORR), memory precision tasks for objects and scenes (Mnemonic Discrimination Task for Objects and Scenes, MDT-OS), and a familiarity-based memory task (Complex Scene Recognition, CSR). A short-term decline in the familiarity-dependent task was observed in all patients with an MCI diagnosis, while both the familiarity-dependent memory task and memory precision for objects task were sensitive to decline in the MCI  $A\beta+$  group specifically. Change in the remotely assessed familiarity-dependent memory was correlated with multi-year change on

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<sup>13</sup>Section for Dementia Research, Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research and Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

<sup>14</sup>Department of Neurology, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

<sup>15</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Göttingen, Germany

<sup>16</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Medical Center Goettingen, University of Goettingen, Goettingen, Germany

<sup>17</sup>Neurosciences and Signaling Group, Institute of Biomedicine (iBiMED), Department of Medical Sciences, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

<sup>18</sup>Department of Psychosomatic Medicine, Rostock University Medical Center, Rostock, Germany

<sup>19</sup>German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Rostock, Germany

<sup>20</sup>Department of Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, WI, USA

<sup>21</sup>Excellence Cluster on Cellular Stress Responses in Aging-Associated Diseases (CECAD), University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany

<sup>22</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Medical Faculty, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany

<sup>23</sup>Institute of Cognitive Neurology and Dementia Research (IKND), Otto-von-Guericke University, Magdeburg, Sachsen Anhalt, Germany

<sup>24</sup>Center for Behavioral Brain Sciences (CBBS), Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg, Magdeburg, Sachsen Anhalt, Germany

<sup>25</sup>Clinical Memory Research Unit, Department of Clinical Sciences, Lund University, Lund, Sweden

#### Correspondence

Sarah E. Polk, German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE), Magdeburg, Germany.  
Email: [Sarah.Polk@dzne.de](mailto:Sarah.Polk@dzne.de)

annual in-person neuropsychological assessments. Finally, in-person tests were not sensitive to short-term cognitive changes in MCI.

**Conclusion:** Altogether, these findings show that frequent remote cognitive testing is a promising tool to feasibly capture subtle and short-term cognitive decline.



