

Advice on standard assessment for diagnosing dementia

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Internationally renowned experts in dementia and cognitive assessment, including researchers from UNSW Sydney's Center for Healthy Brain Aging (CHeBA), have provided expert opinion on the development of a standard set of neuropsychological tests for patients presenting to memory clinics, to ensure consistency in diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment and dementia.

The invited experts, which included CHeBA Co-Directors Professor Henry Brodaty and Professor Perminder Sachdev, and Leader of the Neuropsychology Group, Dr. Nicole Kochan, acknowledge that a standard assessment for individuals presenting with cognitive difficulty is an international priority.

A critical step in the diagnostic process for people with cognitive complaints referred to a [memory](#) clinic is to examine performance on a set of neuropsychological tests. It has been evident that different tests are more sensitive to different disorders which can lead to varied diagnoses for patients.

Dr. Nicole Kochan said that the testing process not only differed across regions and countries but also differed among local clinics here in Australia.

"This research recommends a uniform set of tests that a person should receive when attending a memory clinic to receive a comprehensive assessment of their cognition, thinking abilities and problem solving," said Dr. Kochan.

"Standard diagnostic procedures then ensure best practice and consistency across diagnosis of [dementia](#)," she said.

Many efforts have been made internationally to tackle this problem.

In Australia, CHeBA's experts are involved with The Australian Dementia Network (ADNeT), which is one such group with a key objective of developing unified guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of neurocognitive disorders and the creation of a network of memory clinics.

The consensus, published in *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, and led by Dr.

Marina Boccardi at DZNE-Rostock, clearly defines a European standard for the cognitive assessment within memory clinics.

The battery used includes best performing traditional and new tests sensitive to the typical memory deficits of Alzheimer's disease and to a range of other neurodegenerative conditions.

The research highlighted that a standard [assessment](#) would mean results from cognitive assessments were immediately comparable across Centers and clinics. This would also benefit research through the capability of pooling data from different Centers, where patients consented.

CHeBA's Co-Directors said that ultimately a standardized [test](#) will assist with early detection of Alzheimer's disease and related neurocognitive disorders, ensuring greater access to new clinical trials and person-centered care.

More information: Marina Boccardi et al, P2-468: Development of a consensus roadmap to harmonize cognitive assessment, *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jalz.2019.06.2875](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jalz.2019.06.2875)

Provided by CHeBA

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