
Neurocognitive decline in familial caregivers of Alzheimer disease patients: A systematic review

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Abstract

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most prevalent among all dementias. The assistance to AD patients is primarily provided by familial caregivers, who play an important role in the management of the patient's basic needs. Some studies suggest that these caregivers suffer from chronic stress, which may imply significant changes on important brain structures responsible for cognitive aspects. The main objective of this study is to describe the neurocognitive functions (NF) that have been studied in caregivers of AD patients through a systematic literature review. This study was divided in five phases. Through phase one and two, a systematic search was carried out through EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, PubMed and Google Scholar databases. The inclusion criteria were: (1) peer reviewed articles with interventions of a cognitive test or battery administered to caregivers of patients with AD; (2) the interventions in the studies should have addressed one or more of the NF: attention, memory, working memory and/or executive functions; (3) the articles should have been published between 2005 and 2019. Through the process of judges, the final articles were chosen in phase three. Descriptive analysis was conducted in phase four. A total of 10 articles met the inclusion criteria; from these 90%, identified a direct impact on the NF. The Trail Making Test, the Stroop Test and the Mini Mental State Examination were identified as the instruments that were used most frequently to measure NF. The results show that the NF more affected in AD caregivers were attention, working memory and processing speed.