

Press Release* 05-18-2005

New test increases the possibility of early detection and treatment of Alzheimer's

– The new test AQT has extraordinarily good power to distinguish between AD affected and healthy adults. The test gives physicians a more accurate indication of the need to test for AD in-depth – something that is wanting today, says Docent Siegbert Warkentin, Neuropsychologist at the University Hospital MAS in Malmö.

AQT (A Quick Test) is a sensitive test that is able to identify degradation already in the early stages of suspicion. To determine a diagnosis and offer treatment in the early stage of the disease is essential both for the patient and his or her family members.

AQT measures the mental slowing that is often disregarded in the early stages of dementia. Test is quick and simple to implement (taking about 5 minutes), and it catches the patient who otherwise easily ends up in the grey zone between normal aging and the precursor stage of dementia – which therefore often remains undetected and undiagnosed.

Göran Dalfelt, a Neuropsychiatrist with a private practice in Lund has tested several hundred patients: – The test is a significant compliment to existing tests as it gives an obvious warning that something is not right and that further evaluation is needed, which is precise what not primary physicians require. Doctors in primary practice often have inadequate experience with dementia; with this test the primary physician obtains an indicator that a patient should be referred to an expert for follow-up.

The test results are based on the time (sec.) it takes to name visual stimuli; first single colors, then shapes and last a combination of these. Test resultants are independent of a patient's age, sex, intelligence or formal education. The time measurement is a universal measure that can be used globally. Studies in, among others, Sweden and Europe show that the AQT test has a high power to accurately distinguish patient with Alzheimer's disease from normally aging adults.

AQT should be seen as an adjunct to existing tests -- the MMT (Mini Mental Test) is the most commonly used among them. While MMT measures memory, orientation, writing and reading, AQT measures cognitive speed, which is of considerable importance as cognitive or mental slowing can be the first sign of an incipient development of dementia. The MMT is not able to impart clear evidence, while AQT can distinguish between the signs of onset of dementia from normal signs of aging.

Something that is unique about AQT is that you are able to distinguish which parts of the brain are normally engaged during test taking. We see can see in our studies what we measure with the test; which parts of the brain are dysfunctional and this is very rare for a simple screening, says Docent Siegbert Warkentin.

Another great advantage of the test is, according to Siegbert Warkentin, that the patient does not feel that the test violates personal dignity. The patient also does not feel if there is a breakdown in performance, which is often the case when MMT is administered.

Instead most patients find that AQT is fun to take.

Docent Siegbert Warkentin, who is one of the inventors of the test, now lectures and educates staff at care centers and geriatric experts in how the test functions. A number of care centers have already begun to use the test.

Symptomatic treatment with acetylcholinesterase that is started when there is evidence of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease can delay the disease progression and the patient's cognitive degradation by months and years. Treatment should therefore be initiated immediately after identification and diagnosis of dementia.

Dementia is the fourth major disease in the population and therefore one of the main medical and care-giving problems of a community. About 135,000 Swedes today suffer from a form of dementia and half of these have Alzheimer's disease. In year 2030 it is estimated that more than 200,000 Swedes will be affected.

* Translated from Swedish by Elisabeth H. Wiig, 3 September 2005.