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Commentary

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Early Detection of Cognitive Disorders: Integrating Neuropsychiatric Symptoms and Blood Biomarker

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Description

The early detection of cognitive disorders is critical for effective intervention and management, especially in conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia, and other neurodegenerative disorders. One promising approach in improving early diagnosis involves the combination of neuropsychiatric symptoms and blood-based biomarkers. These biomarkers, along with an understanding of the associated psychiatric symptoms, offer a more comprehensive and accessible means for identifying cognitive decline in its earliest stages. Neuropsychiatric symptoms, which include mood disturbances, personality changes, and cognitive impairments, are often among the first indicators of cognitive disorders. When used in conjunction with blood-based biomarkers, these symptoms can provide crucial insights into the underlying pathology, enabling clinicians to detect disorders before they fully manifest Neuropsychiatric symptoms frequently precede the overt cognitive symptoms of many neurodegenerative diseases, making them a valuable early indicator of potential cognitive decline. For instance, depression, apathy, irritability, and anxiety are common in individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, often occurring long before significant memory loss or cognitive dysfunction is apparent. These symptoms can be subtle and easily mistaken for other psychiatric conditions, such as major depressive disorder or generalized anxiety disorder. However, when these neuropsychiatric symptoms are identified in individuals at risk for cognitive disorders, they can act as a red flag, prompting further neurological evaluation. Tracking these symptoms over time can also help clinicians gauge the progression of the disease and adjust treatment plans accordingly. While neuropsychiatric symptoms play an important role in early detection, blood-based biomarkers are gaining increasing attention for their potential to provide objective, measurable indicators of cognitive decline. Blood biomarkers are particularly attractive because they are non-invasive, cost-effective, and easily accessible compared to more traditional diagnostic tools such as cerebrospinal fluid analysis or brain imaging. Several biomarkers, such as amyloid-beta, tau proteins, and neurofilament light chain, have been identified as reliable indicators of neurodegenerative processes in the brain. For example, elevated levels of amyloid-beta and tau proteins are associated with the formation of plaques and tangles in the brain, hallmark features of Alzheimer's disease. The presence of these biomarkers in the blood may signal the early onset of Alzheimer's, even before clinical symptoms become evident. In addition to amyloid-beta and tau, neurofilament light chain (NfL) has emerged as a promising biomarker in detecting a range of neurodegenerative conditions. NfL is a protein released into the bloodstream when nerve cells are damaged, making it a useful indicator of neurodegeneration. High levels of NfL have been found in individuals with Alzheimer's, frontotemporal dementia, and other cognitive disorders. This biomarker can be measured using blood tests, which are far more accessible than the invasive procedures required for cerebrospinal fluid analysis. When used alongside neuropsychiatric symptom assessments, blood-based biomarkers like NfL, amyloid-beta, and tau can help provide a clearer picture of the individual's neurological health. The combination of neuropsychiatric symptoms and blood biomarkers holds significant promise in the early detection of cognitive disorders. By considering both subjective symptoms and objective biomarkers, clinicians can improve diagnostic accuracy and begin intervention strategies before irreversible cognitive decline occurs. This integrated approach could be especially beneficial in the development of personalized treatment plans, as understanding the specific neurodegenerative processes at play would allow for more targeted therapies.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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