

Patient but not sick: effects of an equivocal clinical diagnosis on persons with MCI diagnosis, their relatives and on professional care givers. The case of MCI on question.

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Lay abstract

The Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is frequently diagnosed in persons presenting mild cognitive impairments without any significant loss of autonomy. MCI is a potentially problematic diagnostic category in that not only it lacks precision but also is widely applied nowadays, despite the controversy it provokes within the scientific community. Moreover, the tendency to apply the MCI diagnosis is clearly on the rise within the clinic of the elderly population, thus making it even more urgent to bring about qualitative data, currently missing.

This research is aiming at investigating the effects of the diagnosis on the person and on its relations with his entourage. The topics of special interests are the diagnosed person's own definition of his/her "problem", the vision of his/her future and his/her relations with family, friends and wider social group. The hypothesis, drawing largely on the theory of performativity, is that the announcement of the diagnosis will inevitably influence the diagnosed person's view of his/her own capacities, somatic and mental wellbeing and health and, on the social level, the relational aspects of everyday life.

The research method is qualitative and semi-longitudinal. The diagnosed persons and their next-of-kin relationship participate separately to a semi-structured open-ended interview at two times: shortly after the announcement of the diagnosis and 4-6 months later. An innovative method of visual analysis of discourse makes part of the interview. The data are then analysed qualitatively in order to appreciate the influence of the MCI diagnosis and that of the time on the person diagnosed and on his/her relatives.