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## Underdiagnosis of cognitive impairment: Results from a postmortem study

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## Background

The frequency of underdiagnosis of dementia in Brazil is difficult to estimate. Postmortem studies can contribute to obtain data on this matter. The objective of the present study was to identify the number of cases with cognitive impairment submitted to autopsy that had been diagnosed in life, according to the severity of cognitive impairment and neuropathological diagnosis.

## Methods

Data was extracted from the Brazilian Brain Bank of the Aging Brain Study Group (BBBABSG) database, in the period of 2005 to 2006. In this period, the subset of people who died in the metropolitan area of São Paulo and were submitted to autopsy in the SPAS were assessed, after informed consent. Cognitive assessment in the BBBABSG was obtained by the CDR application to a reliable informant. Neuropathology followed the BBBABSG criteria. Age, gender and scores of CDR were extracted from the records. Data was analyzed descriptively, as for total frequency and in each gender.

## Results

Samples was composed by 252 cases, mostly females (50.8%) with mean age of 73.35±11.59 yo. Concerning the cognitive impairment, 62.0% of the subjects had no cognitive impairment (CDR 0) and 38.0% were cognitively impaired (CDR 0.5 - 13.6%; CDR 1 - 7.9%; CDR 2 - 7.0%; CDR 3 - 9.5%). Dementia was diagnosed before death in 23/59 cases (39.0%). Only 8/26 of AD cases were diagnosed before death. (30.8%). Underdiagnosis was also frequent in Mixed Dementia Cases (11/ 31; 64.5%) and Vascular Dementia (1/18; 94.4%).

## Conclusions

Underdiagnosis of dementia is frequent in Brazil.

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