

Experiencing participation or involvement in life situation. A grounded theory study in older persons with mild cognitive impairment.

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Objective: The concept of Mild Cognitive Impairment is gaining more and more importance because of the possible conversion to Alzheimer Disease. In particular amnesic MCI is seen as the preclinical phase of AD and is defined as 'a cognitive deterioration, which is bigger than expected for age, but without limitations in daily functioning'. Researchers are concerned with the objective cognitive deficits, limitations in Activities of Daily Life, but there is no knowledge about the sense of participation experienced by elderly suffering MCI. It can be expected that, like in AD, they already experience social alienation and isolation. This study aims to add to the existing body of knowledge of MCI by exploring the 'person perceived participation' in older people with MCI. The concept of participation has been defined as "involvement in a life situation". International organizations such as the World Health Organization, emphasize the importance of facilitating access and participation in employment, housing, civic activities, leisure pursuits and other activities that represent daily life within particular socio-cultural, economic, geographic, legal and political environments.

Design: based on the 'grounded theory' approach; in-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with 15 patients admitted to non geriatric wards at the University Hospital Ghent, meeting the criteria of MCI in order to gain an insider perspective on the sense of participation. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative method.

Results: Although it is described by the participants that they experience still to be involved in life situations, they report having difficulties to maintain the same level of involvement. Preliminary results show that (a) being part of the social context and (b) being able to perform desired activities is highly valued in experiencing participation and is described as a cluster of different values.

Conclusion and contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: the results of this study highlights possibilities to apply this knowledge in practice. It creates opportunities to use the different values as tools to develop a client centered occupational therapy program.