

Name of Study

Memory loss and changes in self-understanding.

Why is this study important?

Personal identity, defined as the continuity of self over time, is critically dependent on normal memory functioning. Although memory impairment is associated with adverse effects on personal identity, no known studies have investigated how one subjectively experiences memory loss in relation to personal identity; research on this topic has the potential to meaningfully improve therapeutic programs for individuals diagnosed with any of a number of memory impairments, including those patients diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

What is being investigated?

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine how one subjectively experiences memory loss in relation to their personal identity.

Who can participate?

To be eligible for this study, participants must be experiencing the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. Participants must be able to speak English, and they must be willing to reflect deeply upon their life and share their experiences with the interviewer. Participants must also be able to provide informed consent.

At the time of recruitment, eligible individuals who agree to participate in this study will be asked for permission to contact their clinician/neurologist to confirm their diagnosis, as well as their ability to provide informed consent. Based on the information relayed by the individual's clinician/neurologist, the interviewer will then contact the patient regarding whether they have been screened in or screened out of the study. Individuals who do not grant the interviewer permission to contact their clinician/neurologist to confirm their diagnosis and ability to provide informed consent will be considered ineligible for this study.

What is required of the participants?

In the proposed study, Alice Kim (the interviewer) will interview individuals experiencing the early stages of Alzheimer's disease about their memory loss. The interview will be aimed at understanding the subjectivity of memory loss, focusing on how memory problems have affected the way individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease conceive of their lives and interpret themselves as enduring persons.

During the interview, participants will be required to reflect deeply upon their life and share their experiences openly with the interviewer.

What if a participant's memory gets worse while in the study?

This study consists of one session, which will last one hour. Changes in memory during this short session are not relevant.

How large a trial is it?

This study is not a trial, it is an interview study that is focused on the subjective experience of memory loss and how it relates to one's personal identity.

How is the study funded?

This study is funded by research grants awarded to Dr. Romin Tafarodi. Participants will be paid for their participation.

Where can I obtain more information?

More information can be obtained directly from Alice Kim. She can be contacted through email (aa.kim@utoronto.ca) or phone (416-785-2500 Ex. 2938).

Where are the study sites?

This interview study will be conducted in Dr. Romin Tafarodi's laboratory, at the University of Toronto, Psychology Department.

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