

# Aging and Alzheimer's Disease: Findings from the Religious Orders Study

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# Disclosure:

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## Religious Orders Study Participants

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### University of British Columbia

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### Drexel University

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### University of California, Davis

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### University of California, San Diego

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### Illinois Institute of Technology

Konstantinos Arfanakis, PhD

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### RADC Staff

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K23AG23040; K23AG23675

Alzheimer's Association; Illinois Department Public Health

# Objectives:

- Background to Religious Orders Study (ROS)
- ROS Study Design
  - Introduction to the Rush Memory and Aging Project for combined cohort analyses
- Distributions of neuropathology
- Relation of risk factors to:
  - Incident MCI and incident AD
  - Change in cognitive function
  - Neuropathology

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# Background to Religious Orders Study: Name that year

- March - Windows 3.1 released
- April - The Great Chicago Flood
- May - Jay Leno becomes the new host of NBC's Tonight Show
- July - Ex-Soviet Republic of Georgia joins UN
- August – Hurricane Andrew hits south Florida
- October – Dr. David Bennett and colleagues submit grant for Religious Orders Study to NIH

# Background to Religious Orders Study:

- Year: 1992
- Epidemiology – the study of the distribution and determinants of disease in human populations
- Diseases of cognition such as AD are defined clinically
  - However, it has long been known that the pathology underlying AD is heterogeneous

# Clinical, Pathological, and Neurochemical Changes in Dementia: A Subgroup with Preserved Mental Status and Numerous Neocortical Plaques

Robert Katzman, MD,\* Robert Terry, MD,\* Richard DeTeresa, BS,\* Theodore Brown, PhD,†  
Peter Davies, PhD,‡‡ Paula Fuld, PhD,‡ Xiong Renbing, MA,† and Arthur Peck, MD§





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"ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE EFFORTS TO ANSWER  
QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY SOME GET ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND WHY"  
— The New York Times

# *Aging with* **GRACE**



What the  
Nun Study  
Teaches Us

About  
Leading Longer,  
Healthier, and  
More  
Meaningful Lives

DAVID SNOWDON, PH.D.



## Monolulu-Asia Aging Study



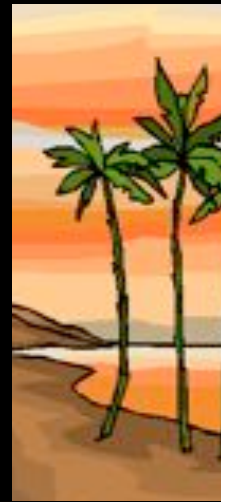
# Background to Religious Orders Study:

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- Diseases of cognition such as AD are defined clinically
  - However, it has long been known that the pathology underlying AD is heterogeneous
- Recent studies were beginning to address this heterogeneity by incorporating neuropathologic indices into epidemiologic studies of aging and dementia
- The overall goal of ROS is to identify risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia and examine the neurobiologic pathways linking risk factors to clinical phenotypes

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# The Religious Orders Study



- Began enrollment in 1994
- > 1,100 older nuns, priests, and brothers without known dementia from across the U.S.
- All agreed to annual cognitive and motor testing
- All agreed to brain donation at the time of death
- > 95% follow-up of survivors
- > 350 incident MCI and > 250 incident AD cases
- ~ 95% autopsy rate with > 425 brain autopsies

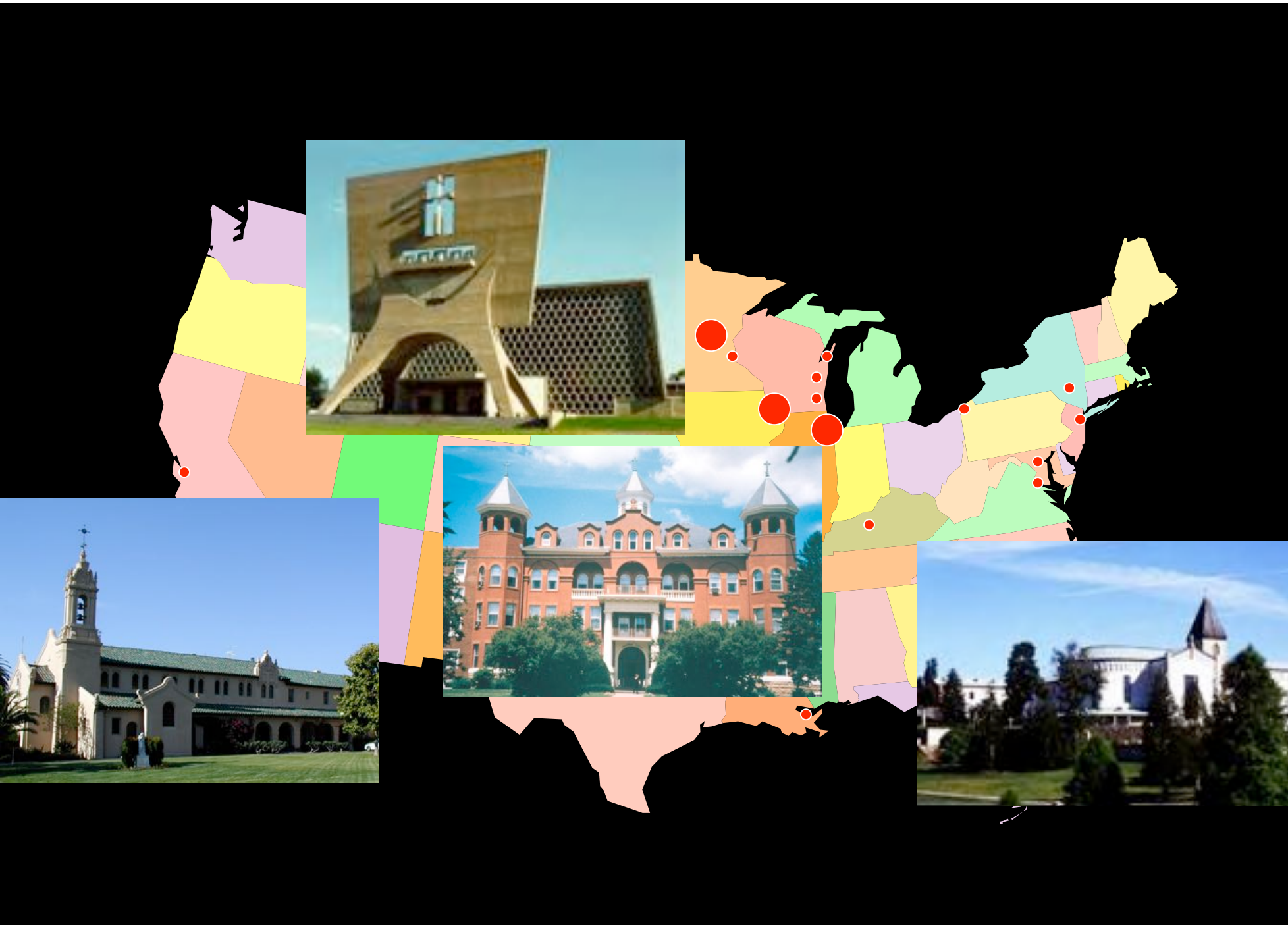






# Religious Orders Study: Participating Sites















## Strengths and Weaknesses:

### ➤ Strengths

- Large numbers of persons enroll without dementia
- Participants comparable in terms of lifestyle factors
- Cohort enriched with genetic variants for dementia
- High rates of follow-up participation and autopsy
- Volunteer cohort permits great depth and breadth of data collection

### ➤ Weaknesses

- Cohort not representative of older persons in US
- Truncated variance of lifestyle factors limits ability to investigate the relation of these factors to dementia
- Geographic dispersion limits clinical and post-mortem data collection

# The Rush Memory and Aging Project

*... because memories should last a lifetime*

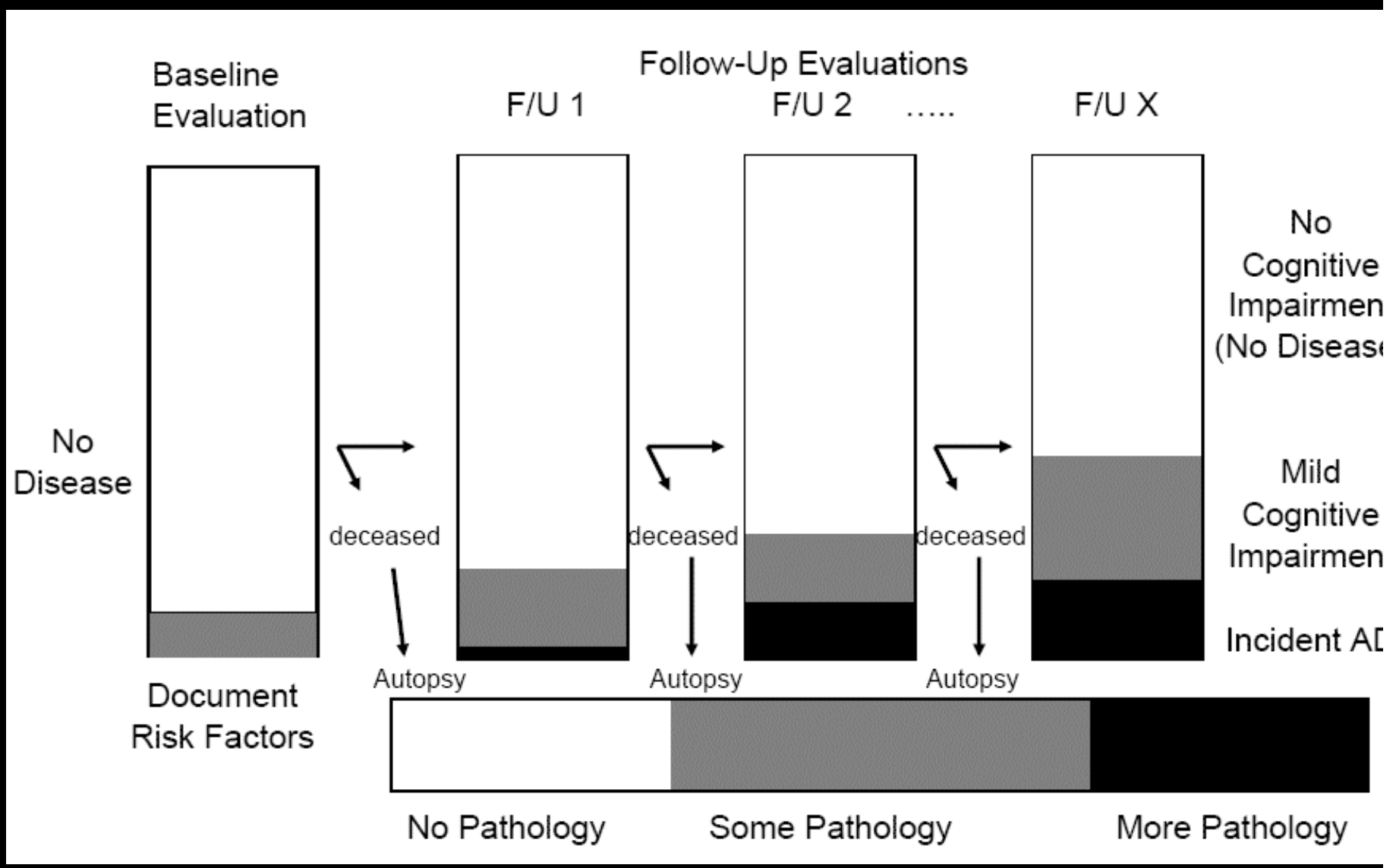


- Began enrollment in 1997
- > 1,200 residents from about 40 retirement communities and senior housing from across the Chicago area
- All agreed to annual cognitive and motor testing, and blood draw
- All agreed to donate brain, spinal cord, muscle, and nerves at the time of death
- > 95% follow-up of survivors
- > 250 incident MCI and > 175 incident AD cases
- ~ 85% autopsy rate with > 250 autopsies to date





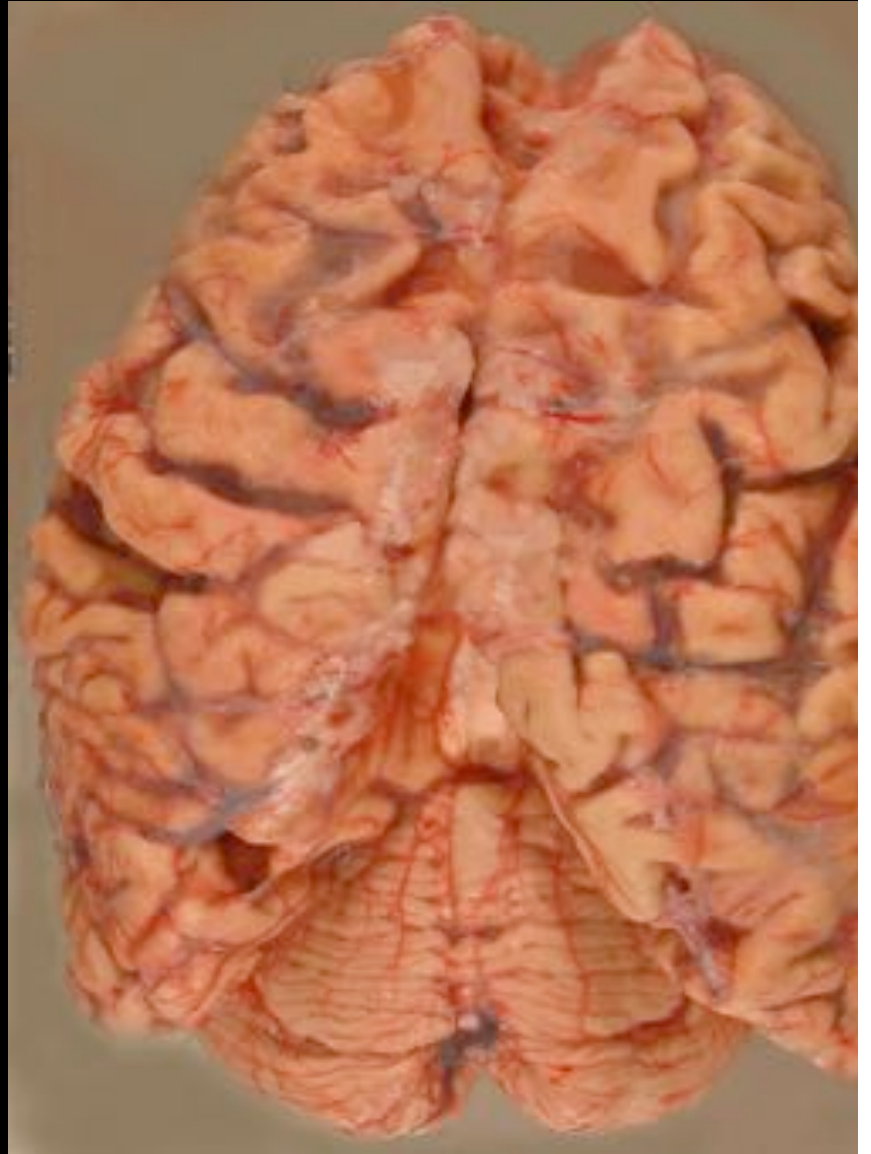
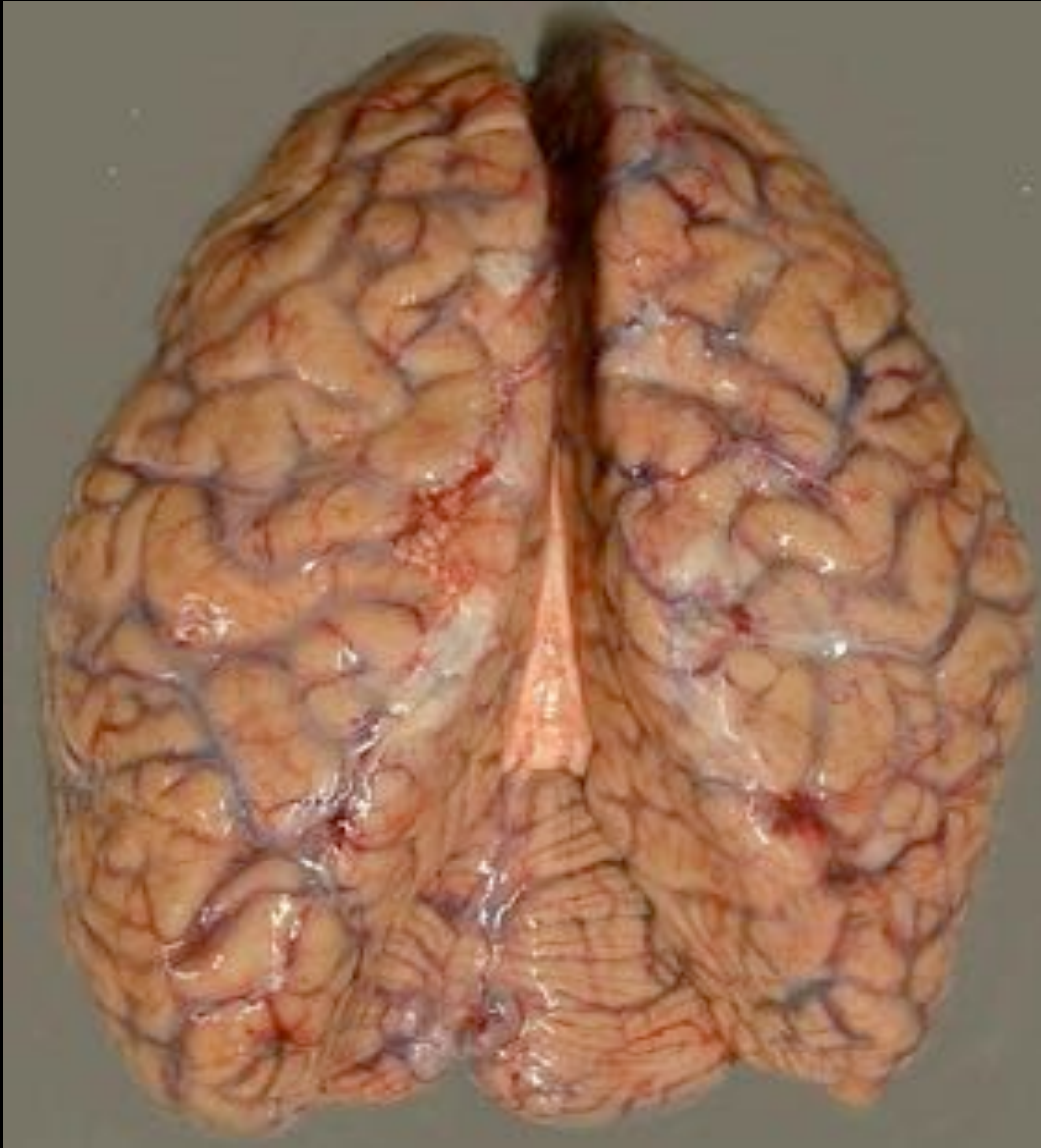
# The Rush Memory and Aging Project: Study Design and Baseline Characteristics of the Study Cohort

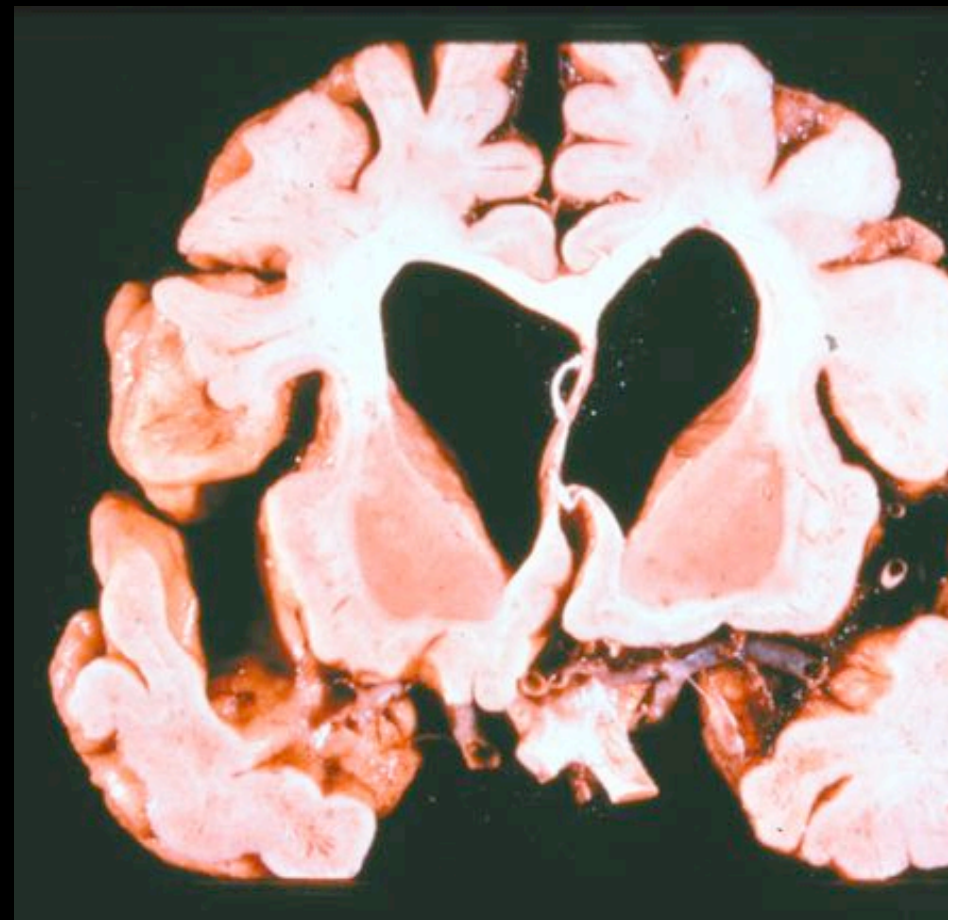


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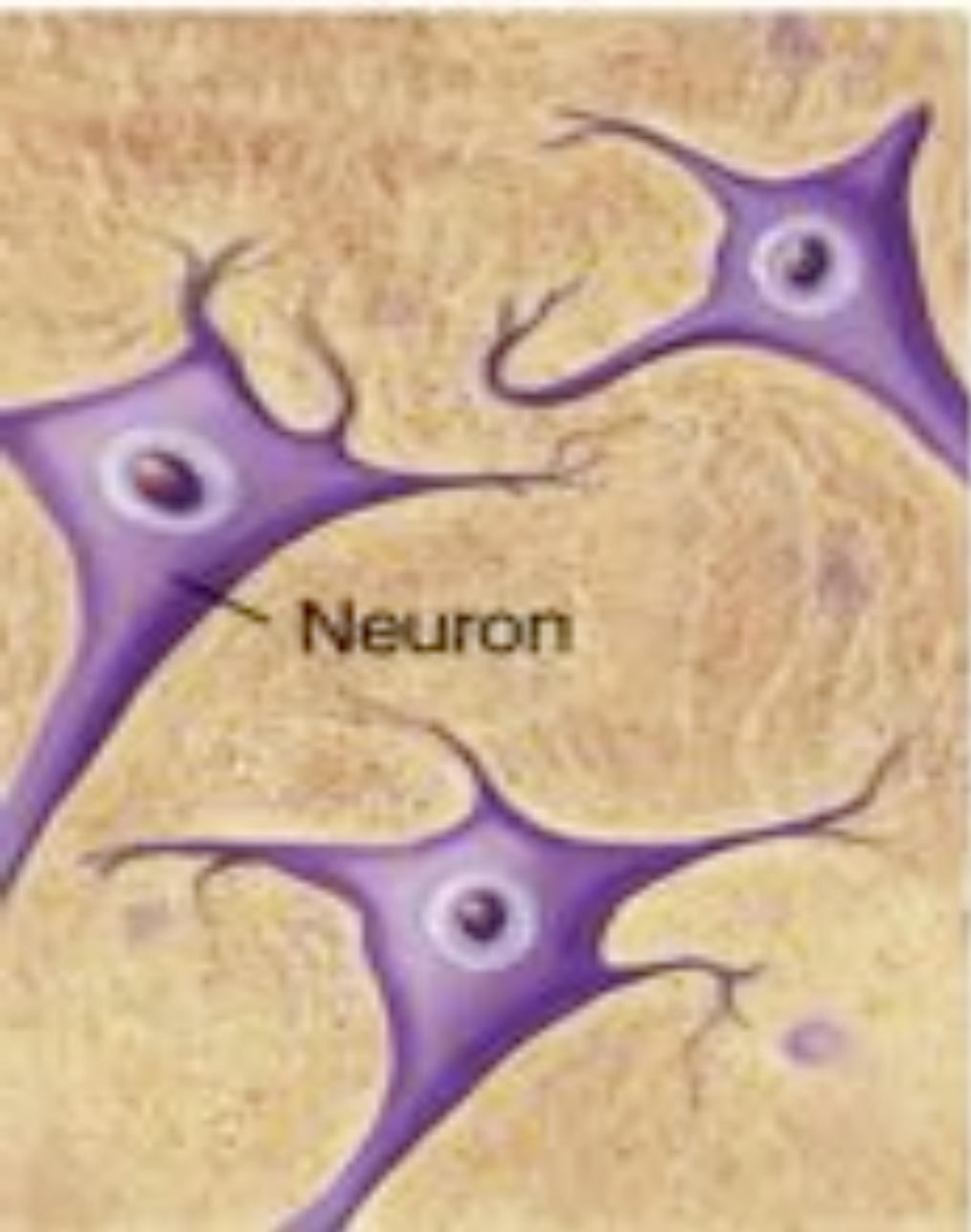




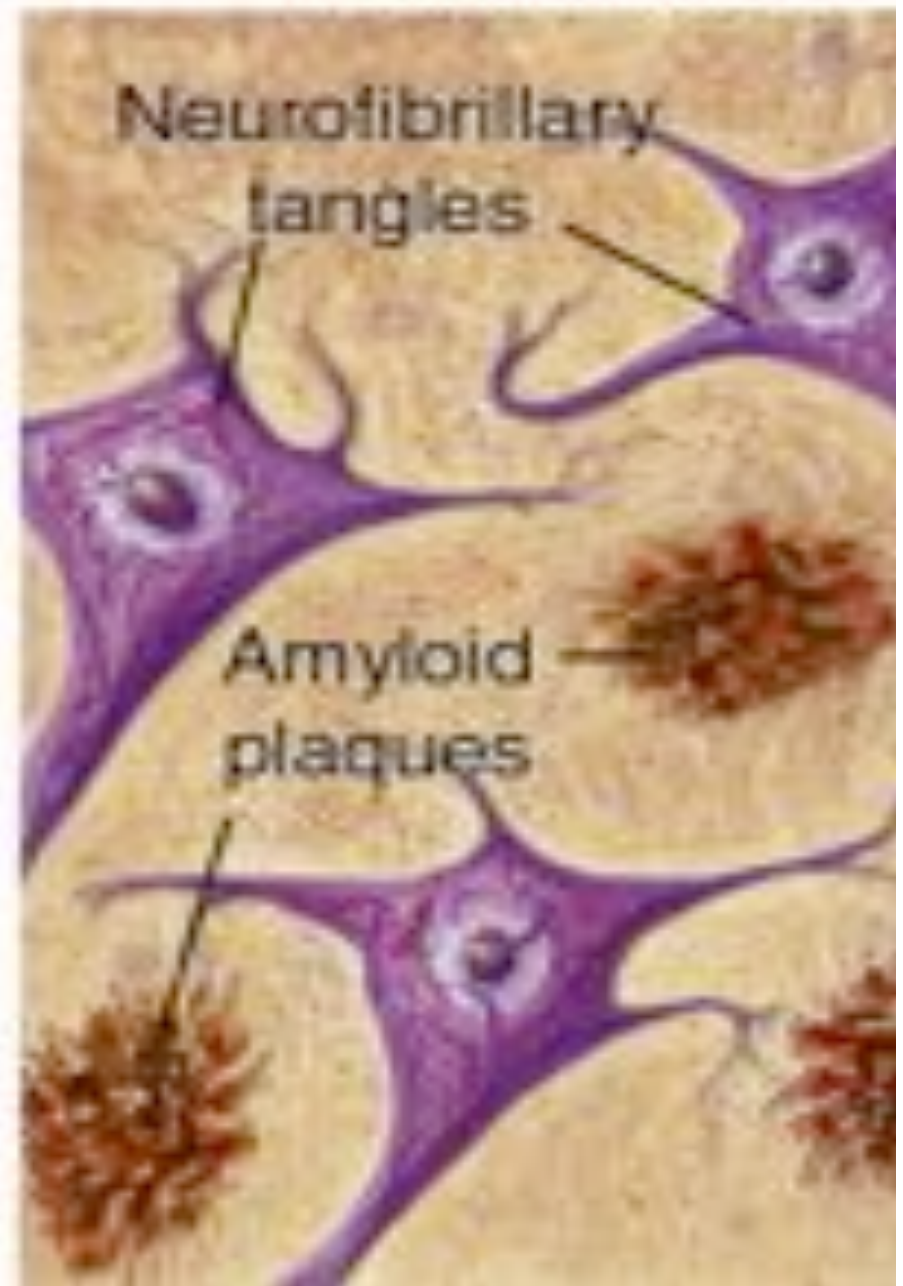




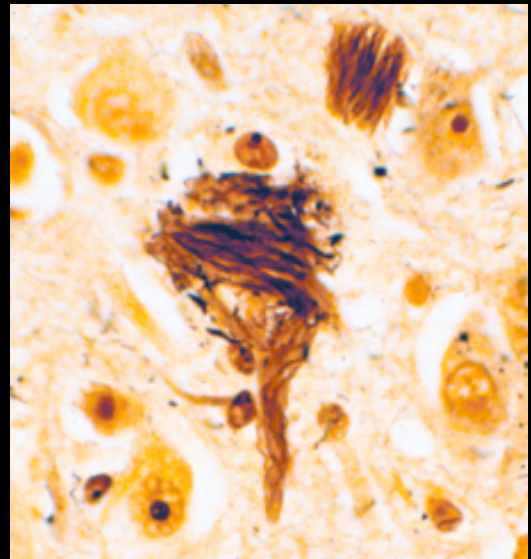
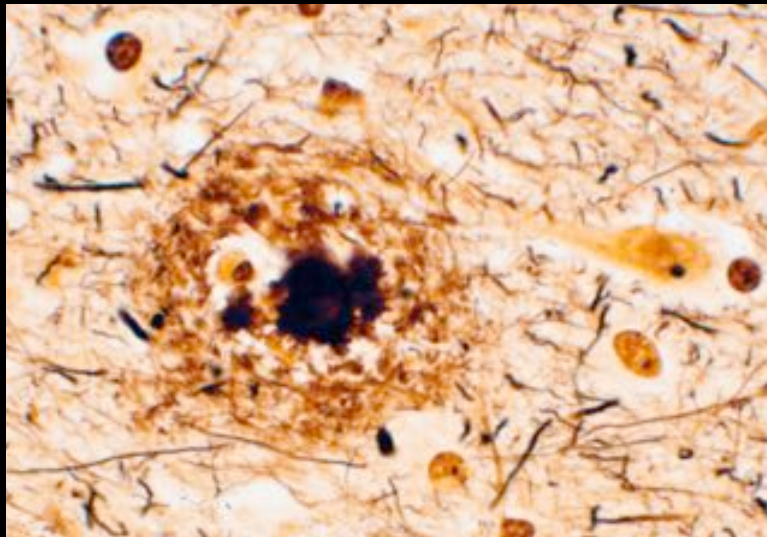
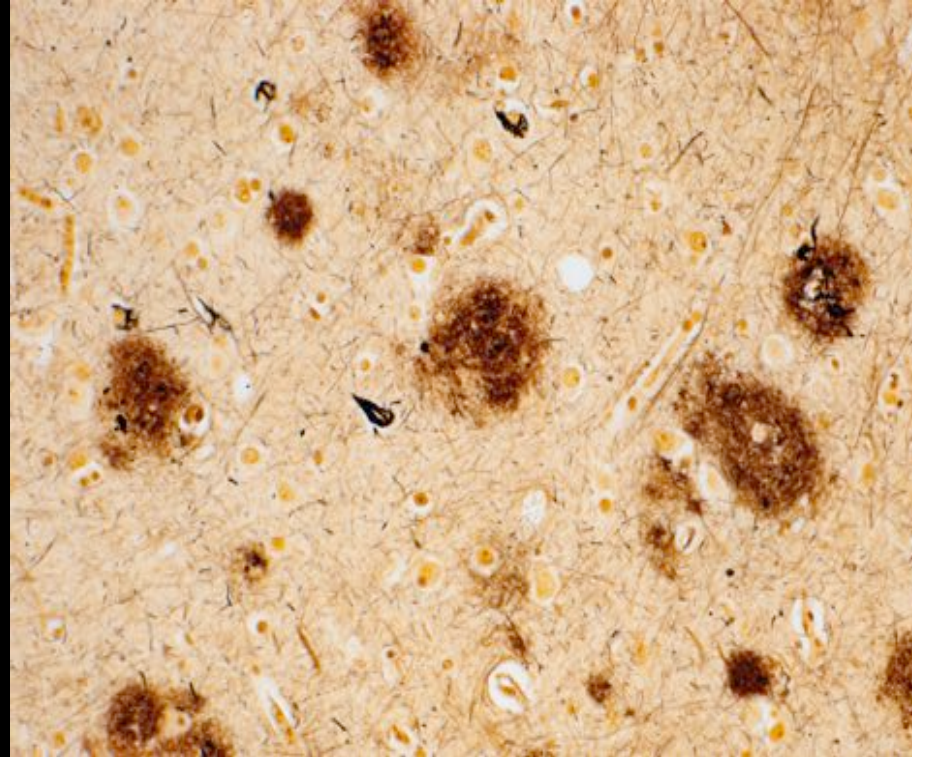
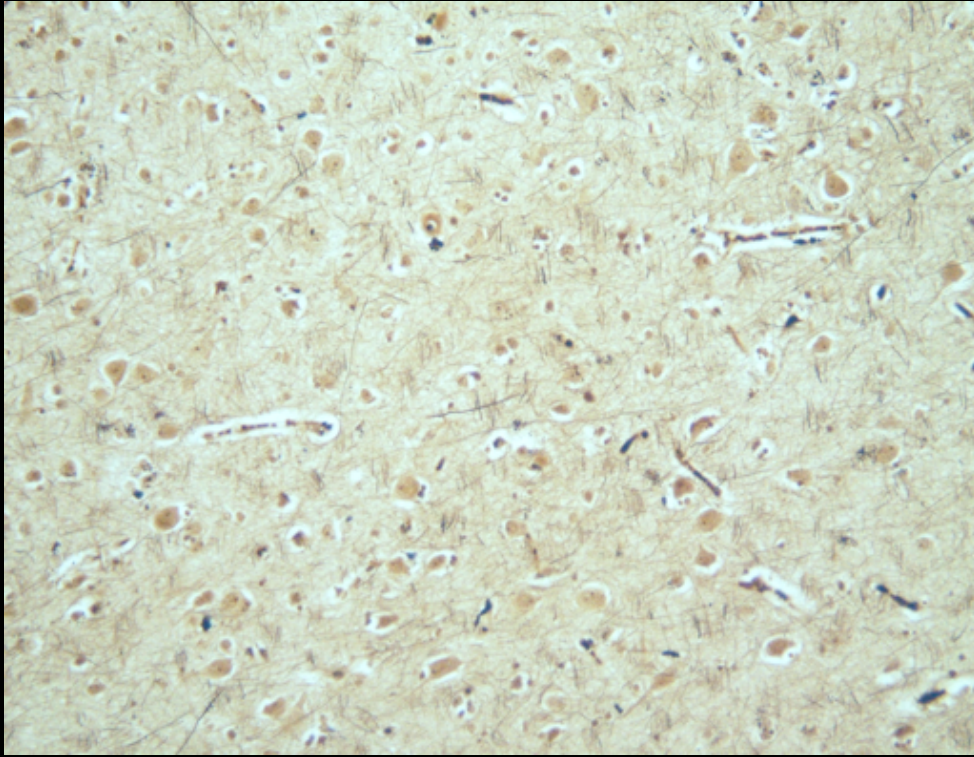
Normal



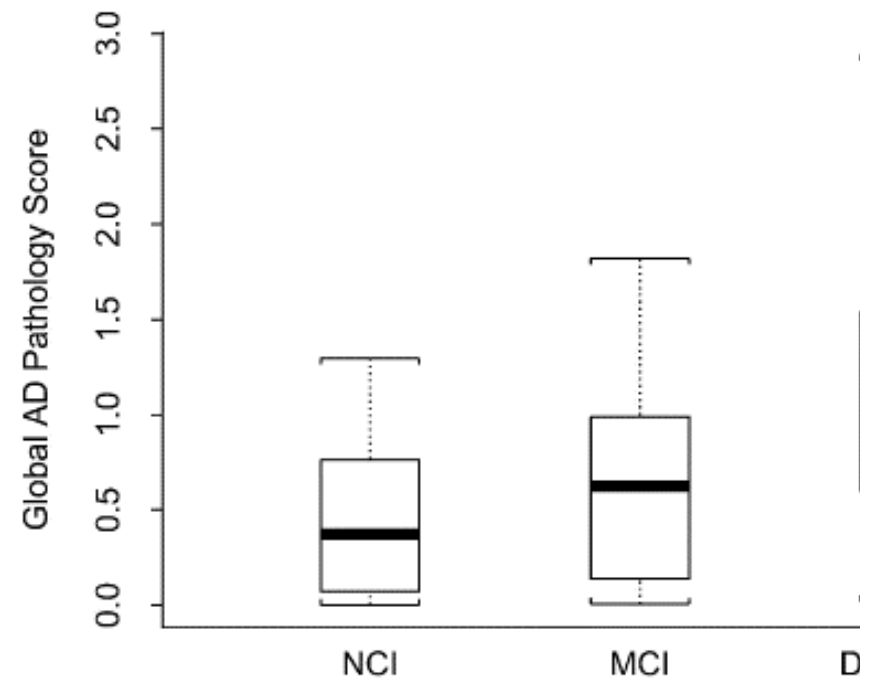
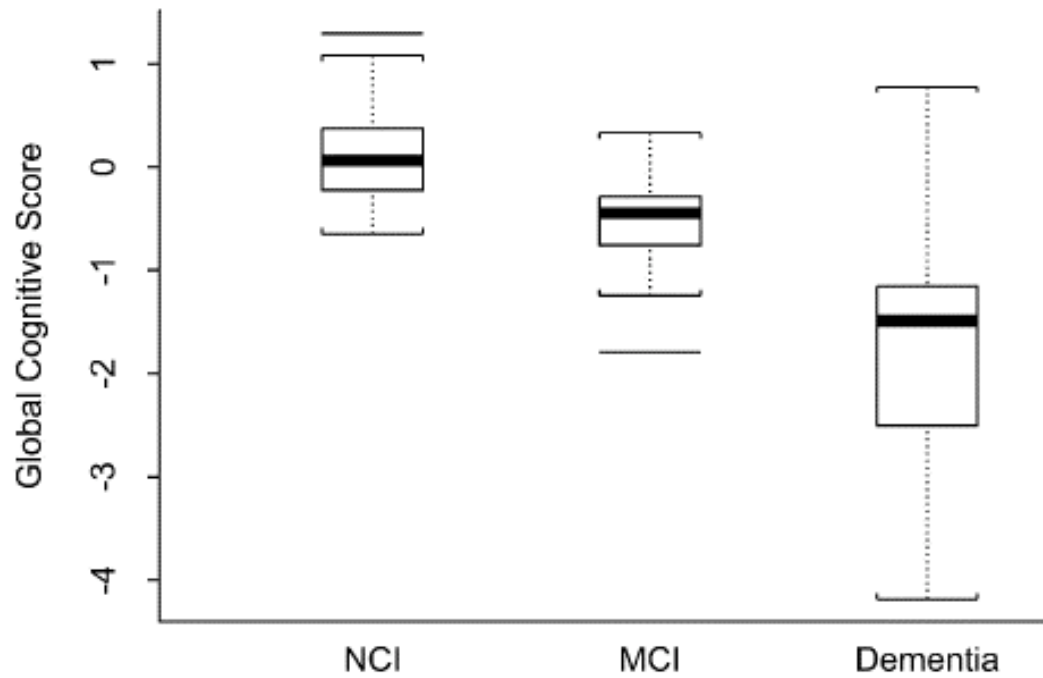
Alzheimer's





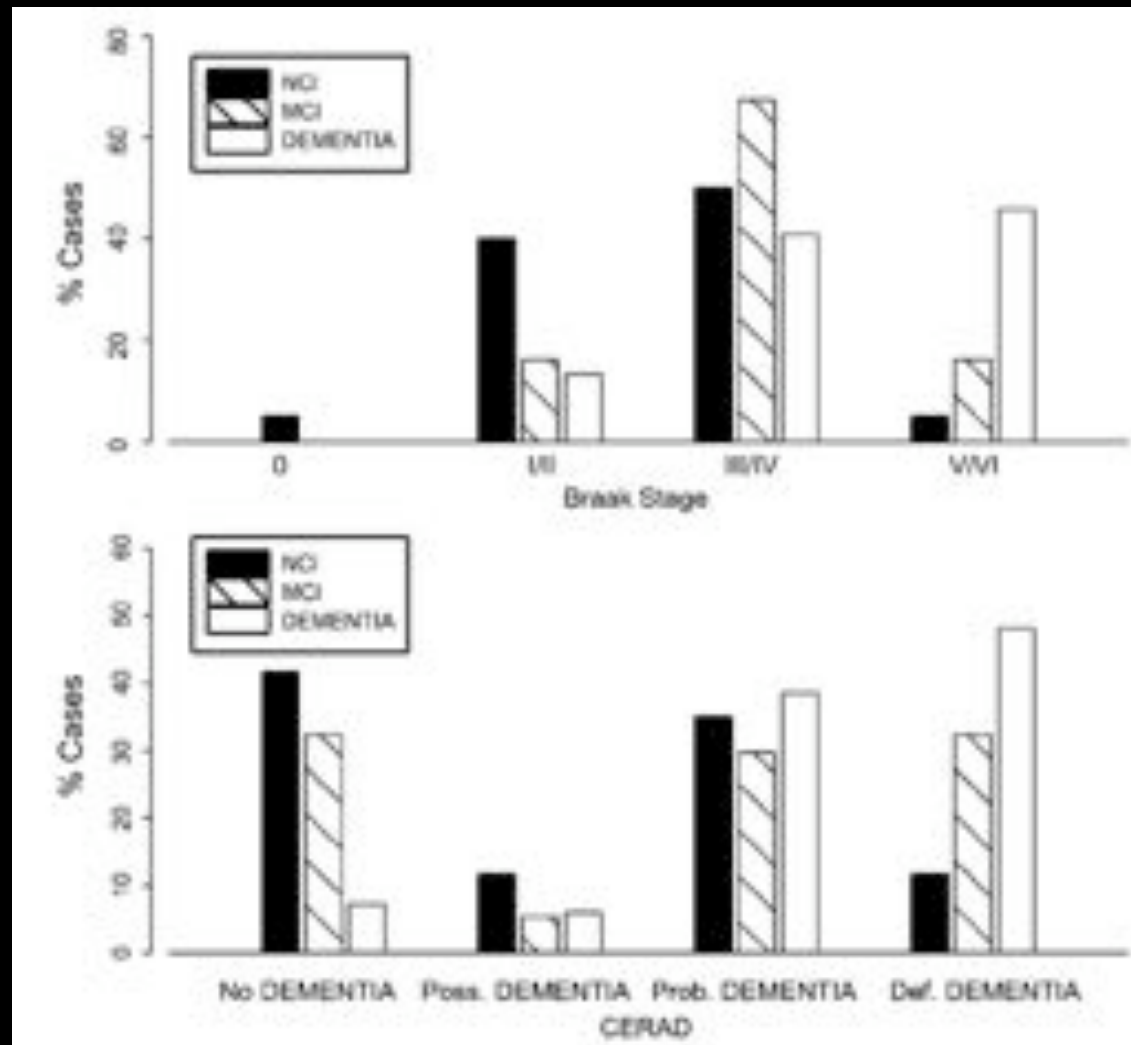


# Mild cognitive impairment is related to Alzheimer disease pathology and cerebral infarctions



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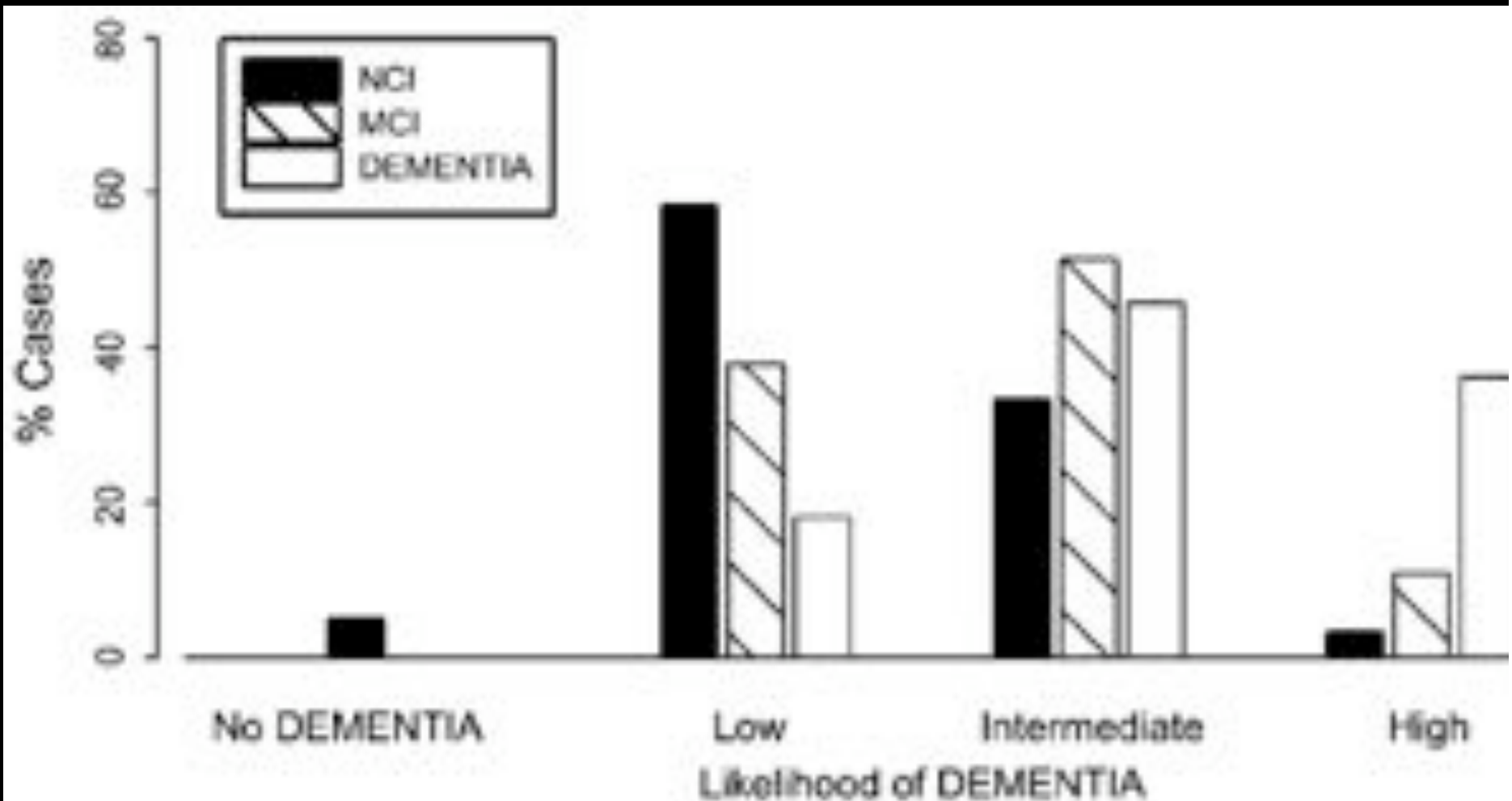
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Bennett DA, et al. *Neurology* 2005;64:834-842.



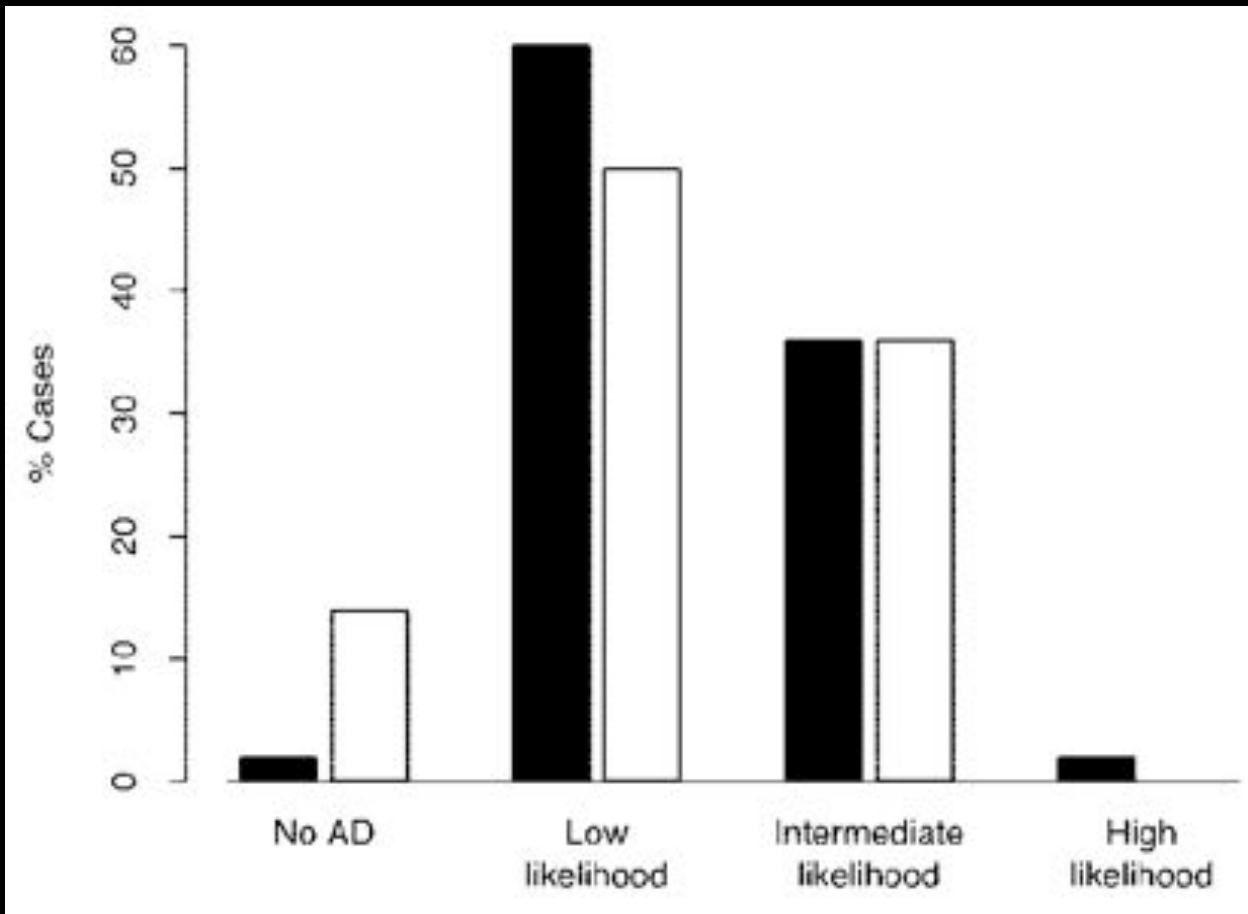
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# Neuropathology of older persons without cognitive impairment from two community-based studies

MMSE proximate to death	28.4 (1.4)	28.2 (1.6)
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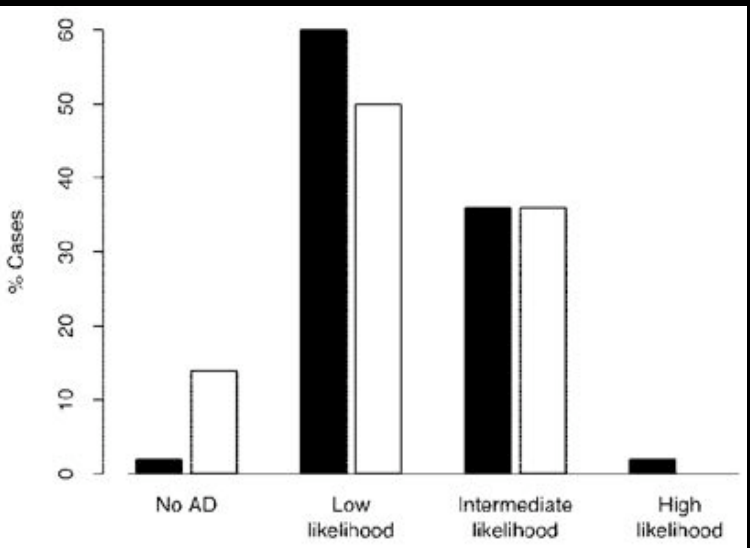






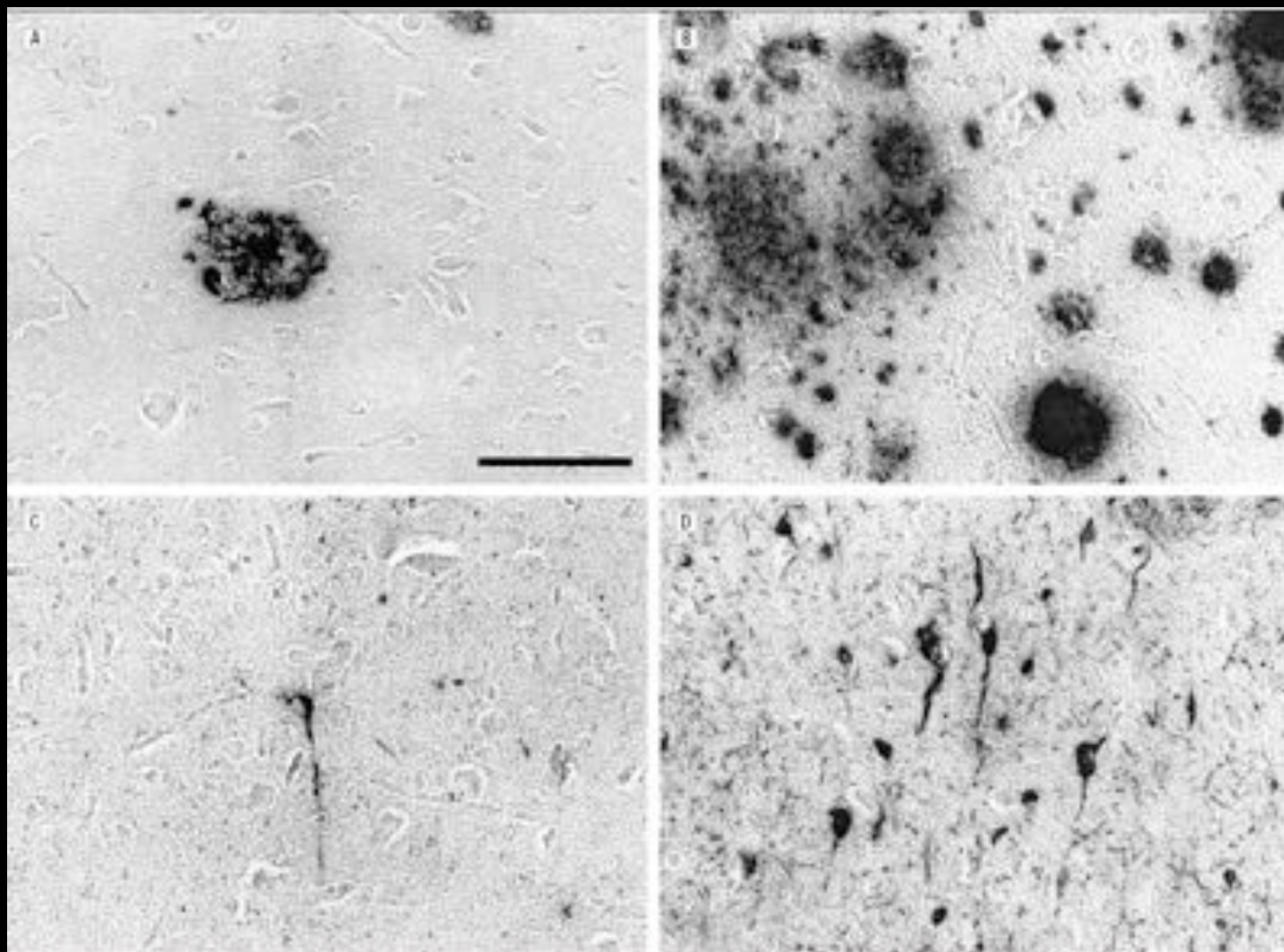
# Neuropathology of older persons without cognitive impairment from two community-based studies

MMSE proximate to death                      28.4 (1.4)                      28.2 (1.6)



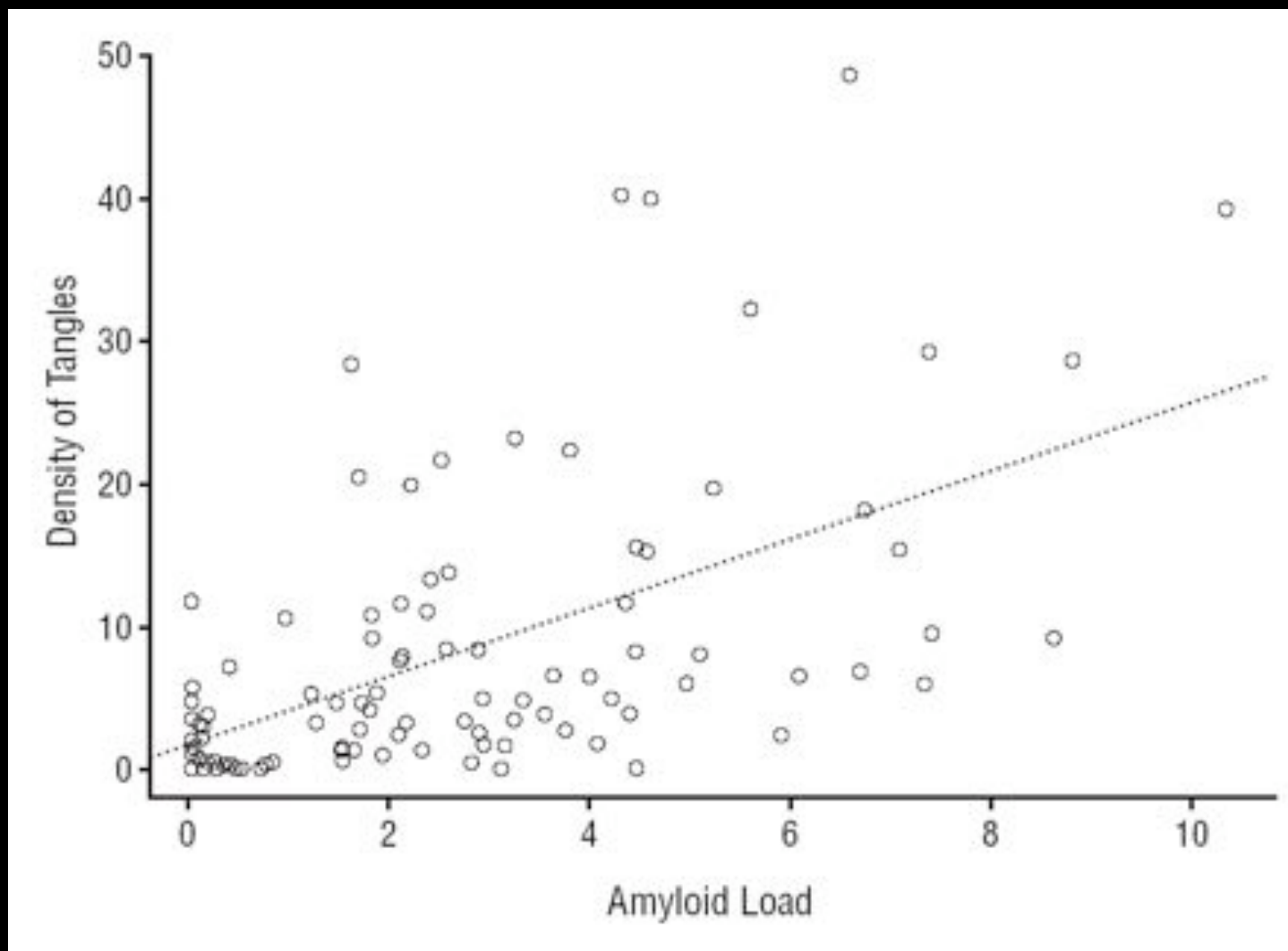
	NIA-Reagan pathologic AD		<i>p</i> V
	No	Yes	
Episodic memory	0.44 (0.45)	0.18 (0.46)	0.01
Semantic memory	0.11 (0.47)	-0.05 (0.50)	0.16
Working memory	0.18 (0.71)	0.00 (0.58)	0.12
Perceptual speed	-0.15 (0.92)	-0.27 (0.77)	0.62
Visuospatial ability	0.03 (0.62)	0.12 (0.59)	0.26

# Neurofibrillary Tangles Mediate the Association of Amyloid Load With Clinical Alzheimer Disease and Level of Cognitive Function



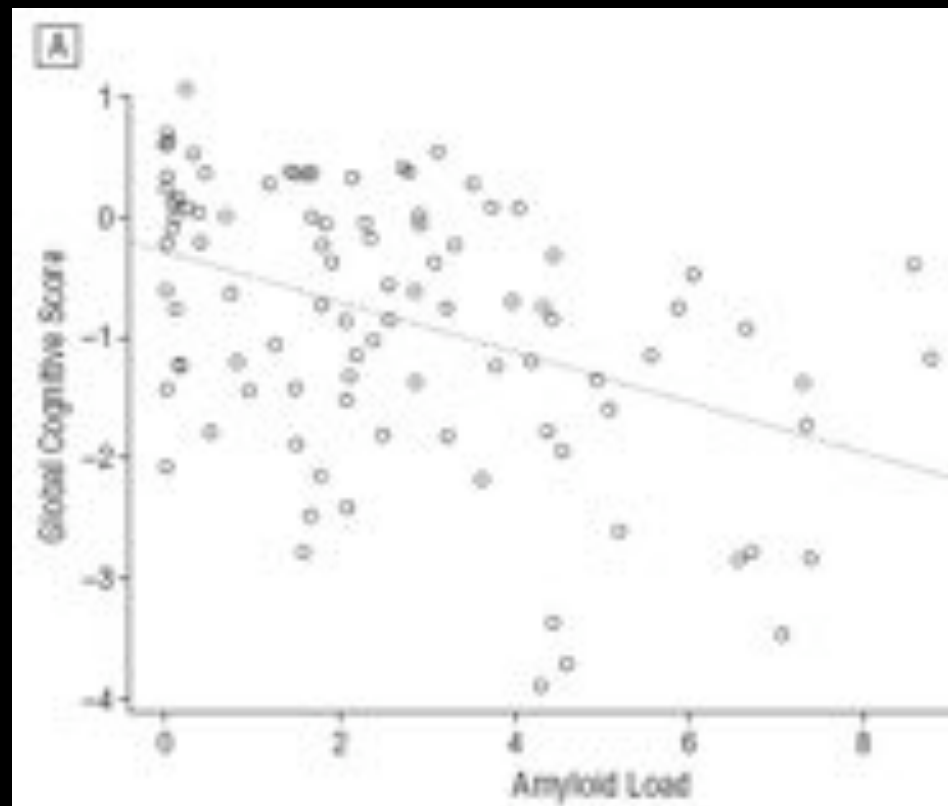
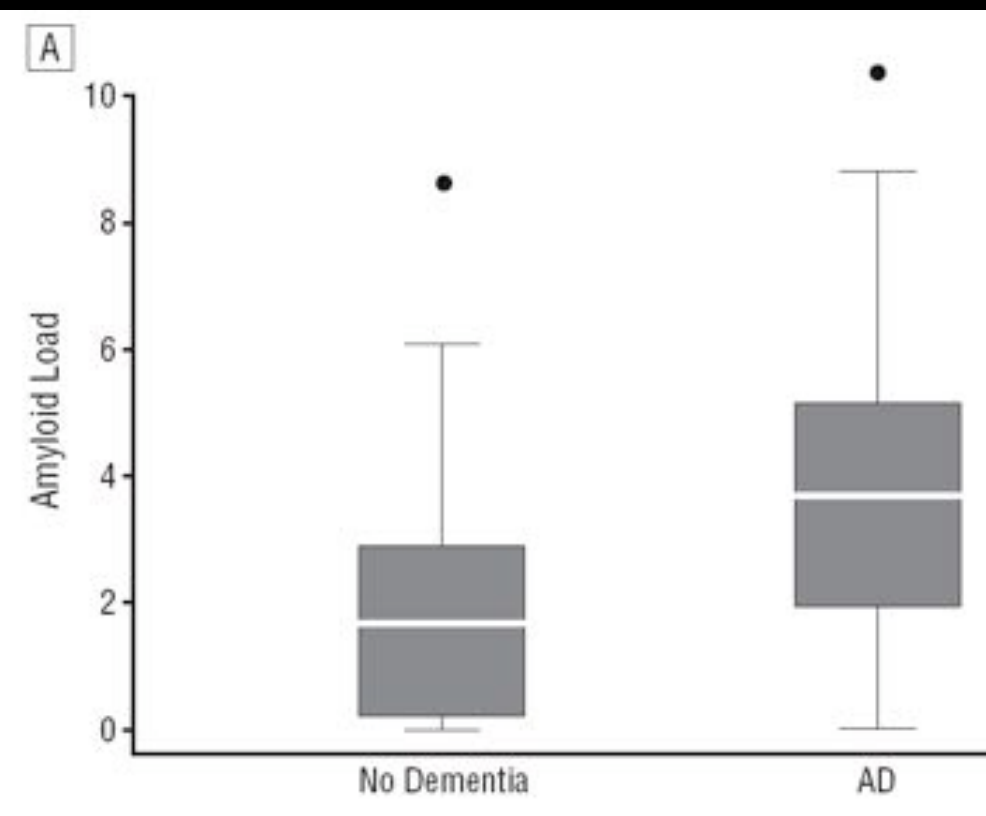
Bennett DA, et al. *Arch Neurol* 61:378-384

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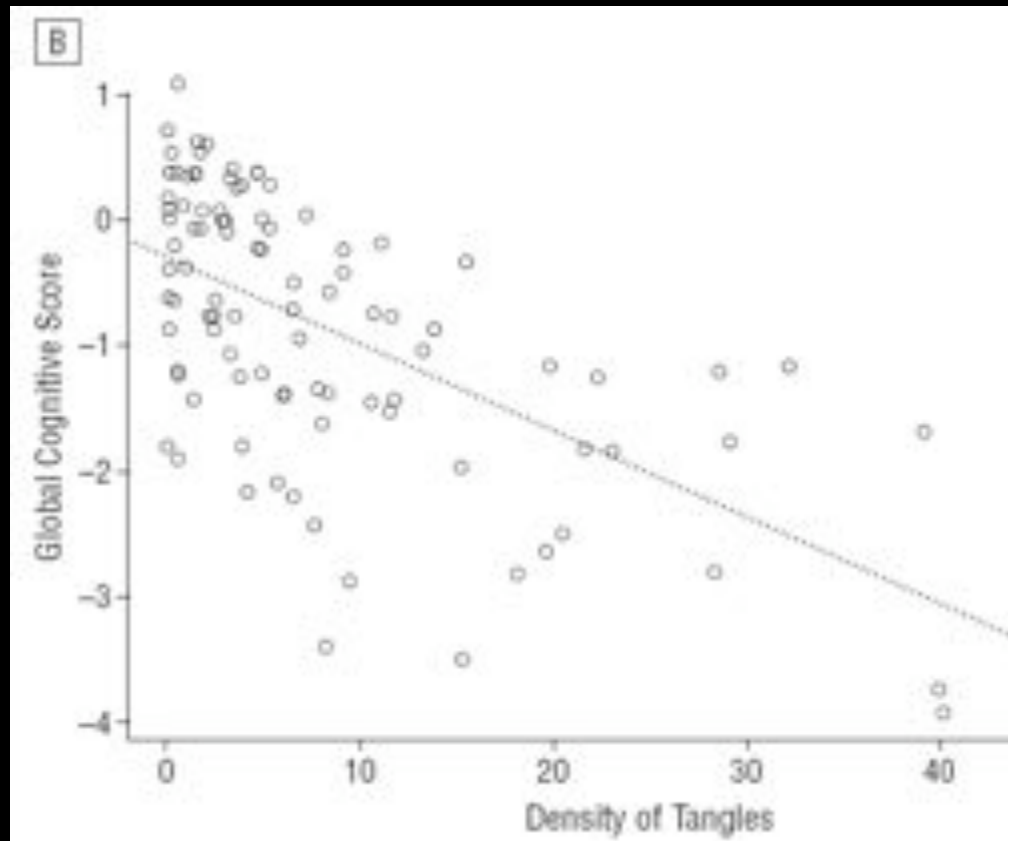
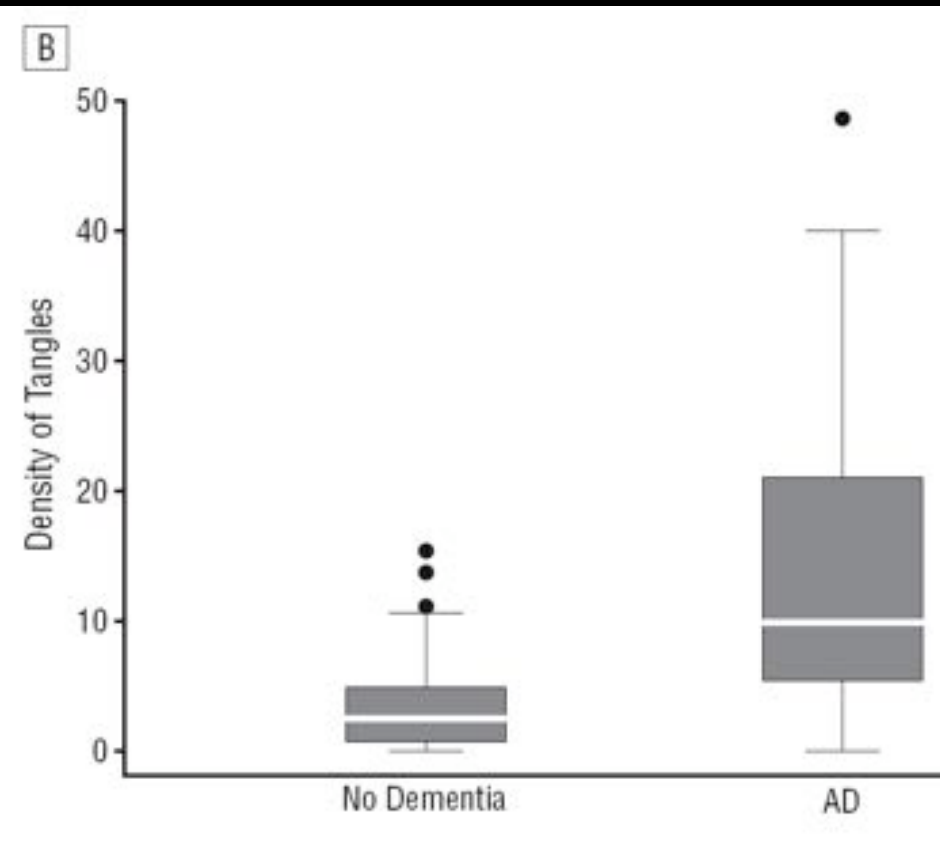


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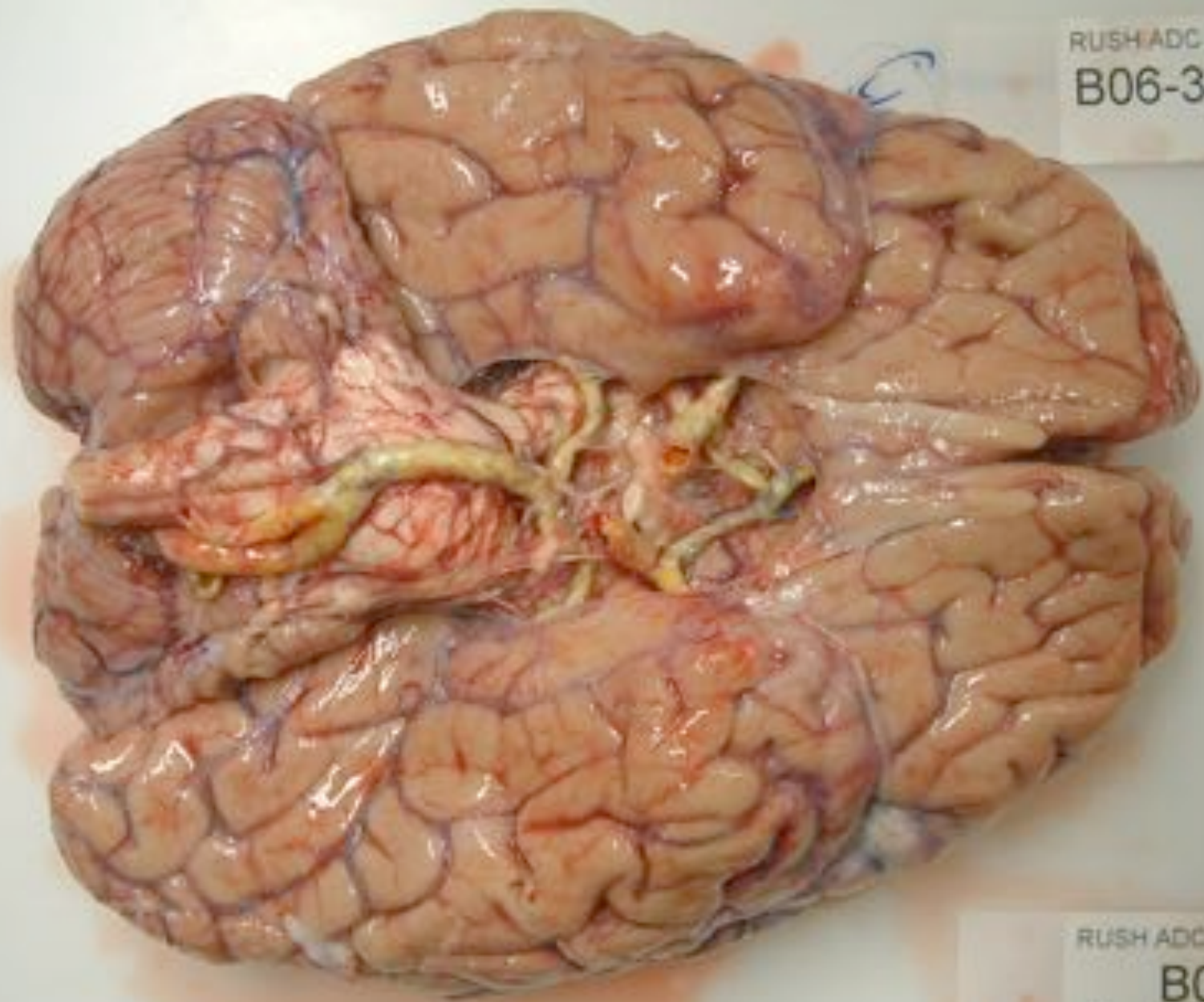


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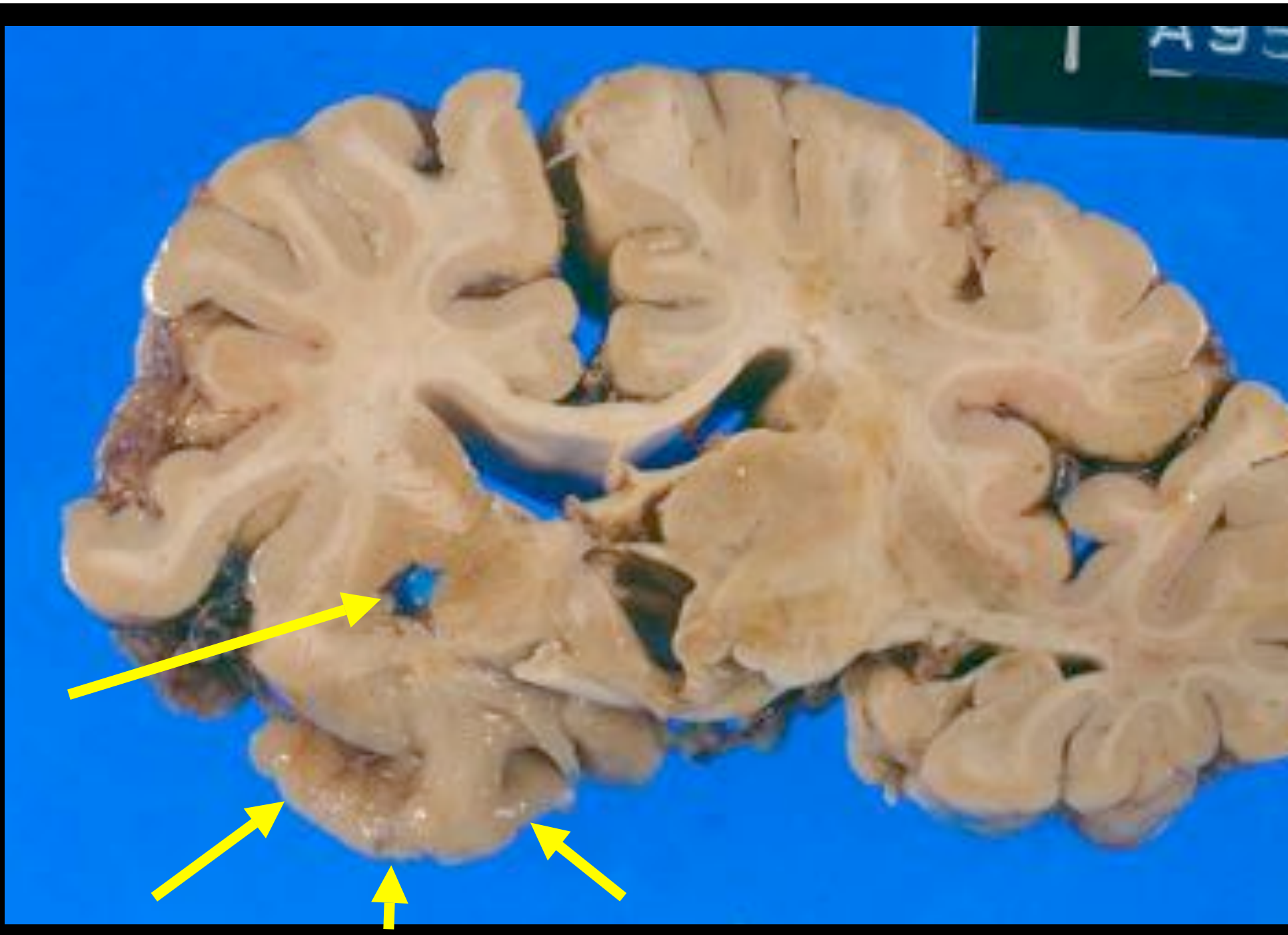


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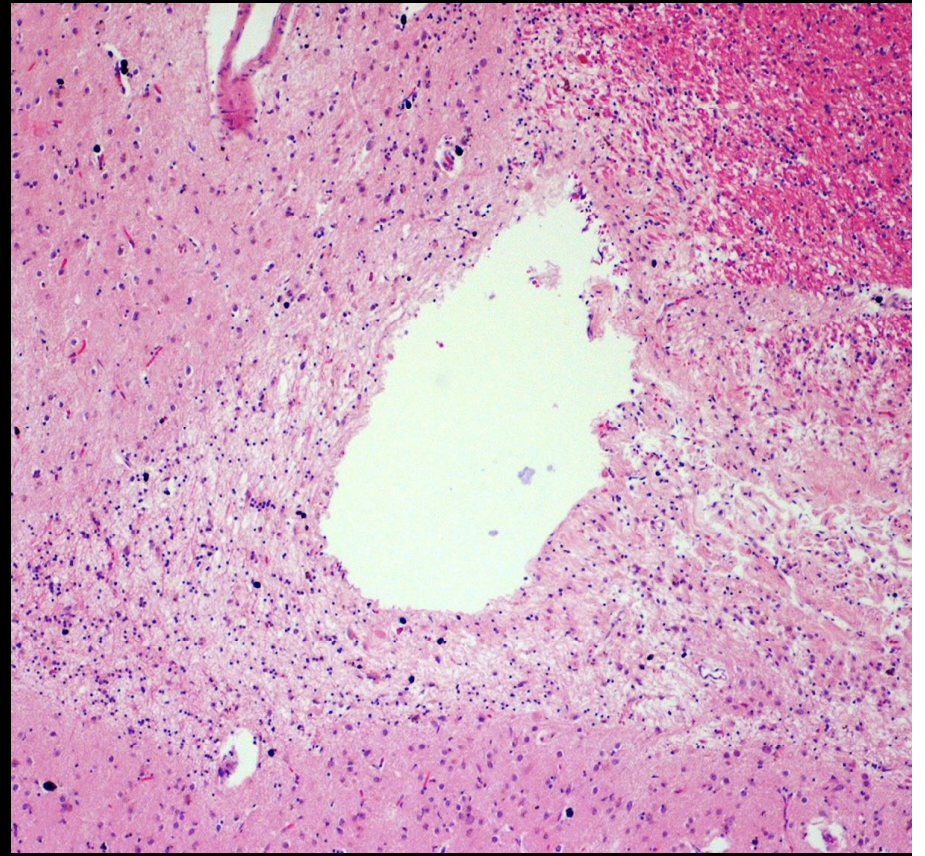
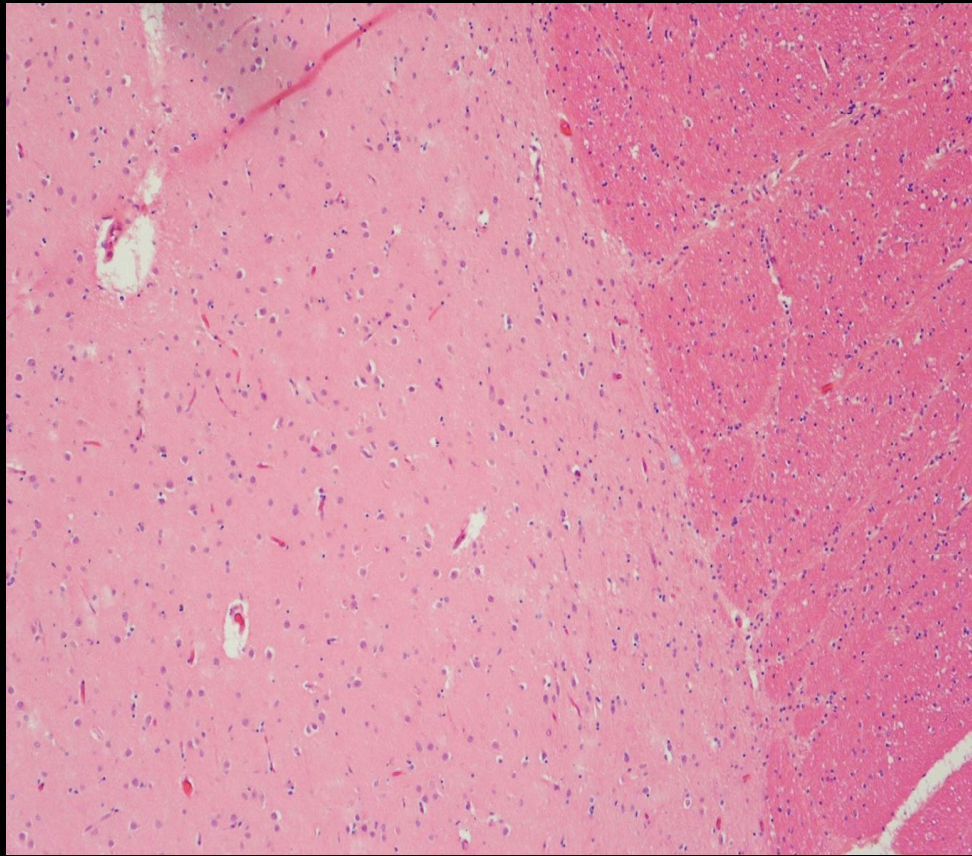


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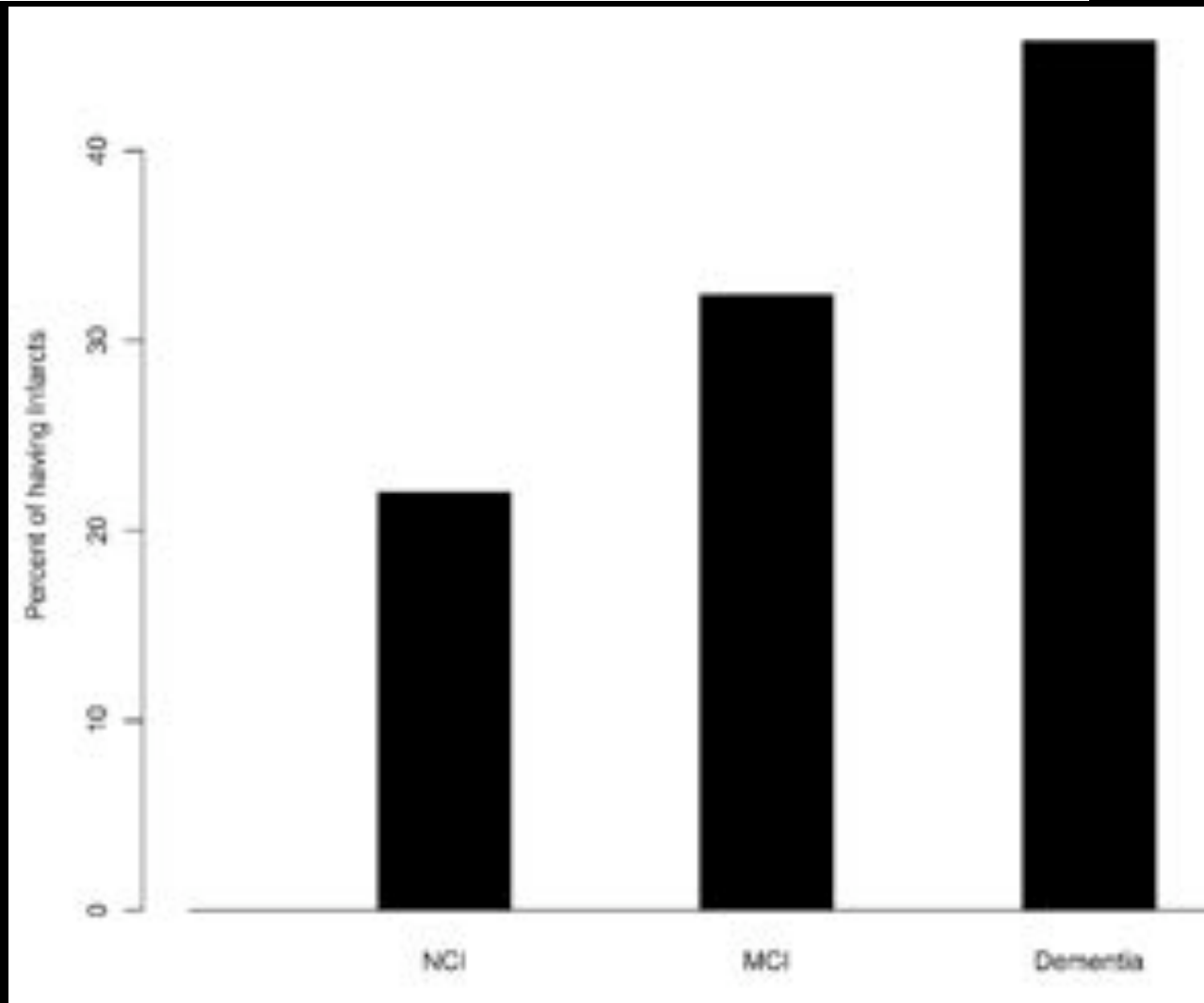








# Mild cognitive impairment is related to Alzheimer disease pathology and cerebral infarctions

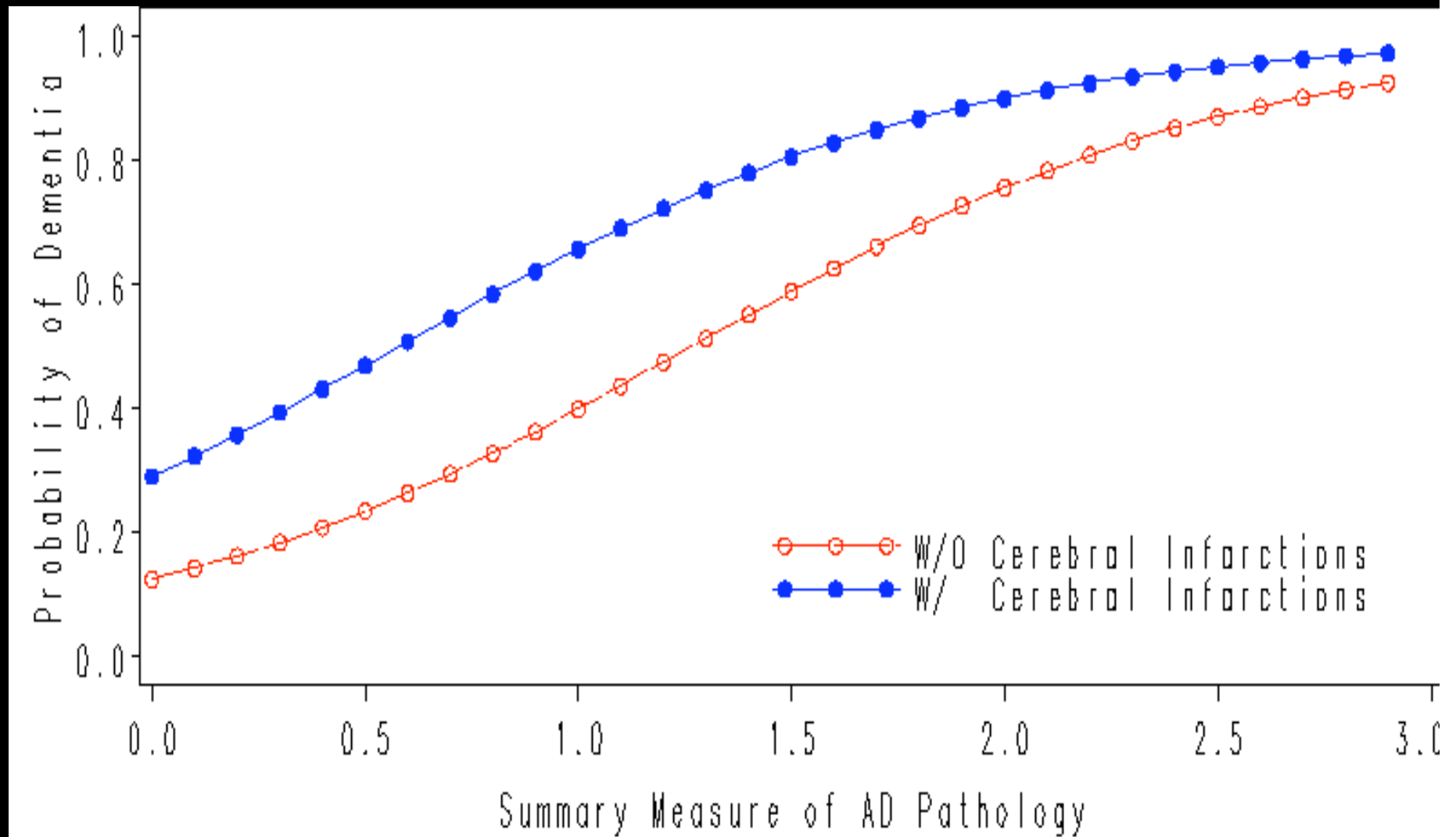


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## Cerebral infarctions and the likelihood of dementia from Alzheimer disease pathology

Model, predictors*	Odds of dementia	95% C
1. One unit AD pathology†	4.40	2.33–8.3
2. One unit of AD pathology	4.62	2.41–8.8
Presence of macroscopic infarctions	2.80	1.26–6.2

# Cerebral infarctions and the likelihood of dementia from Alzheimer disease pathology



# Cerebral infarctions and the likelihood of dementia from Alzheimer disease pathology

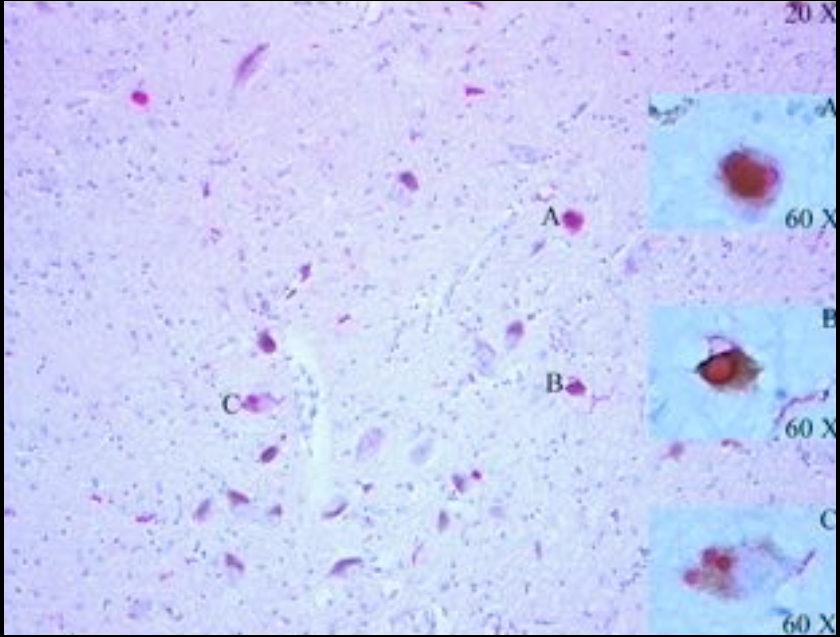
Parameter estimates for cognitive domain scores (*p* value)

Models*	Episodic memory	Working memory	Semantic memory	Perceptual speed	Visual
1. One unit of AD pathology	-0.96 ( $<0.0001$ )	-0.36 (0.0009)	-0.56 (0.0005)	-0.56 ( $<0.0001$ )	-
2. One unit of AD pathology	-0.99 ( $<0.0001$ )	-0.37 (0.0004)	-0.58 (0.0002)	-0.61 ( $<0.0001$ )	-
Presence of macroscopic infarctions	-0.48 (0.02)	-0.25 (0.08)	-0.44 (0.04)	-0.80 ( $<0.0001$ )	-

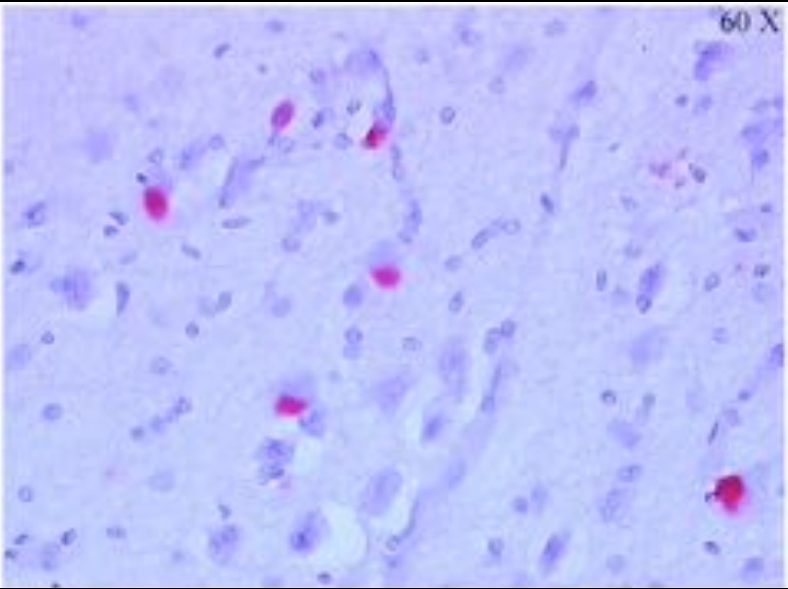
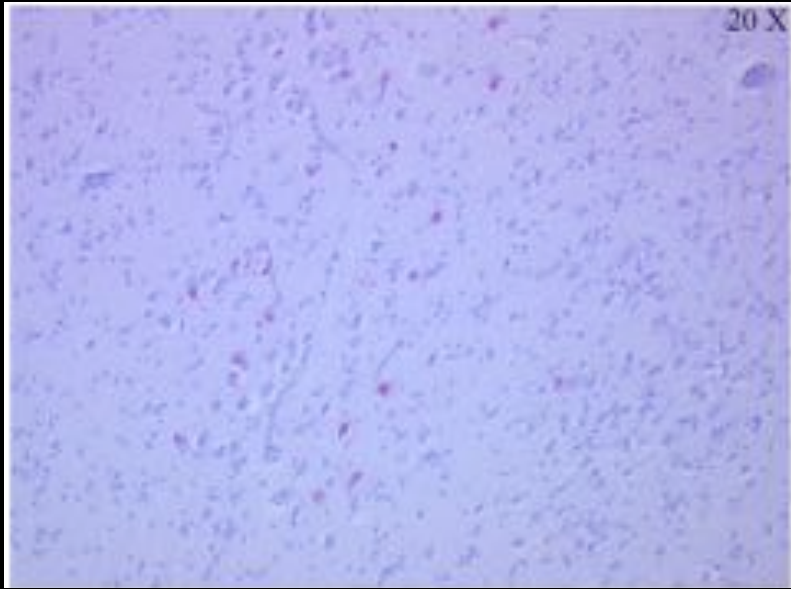
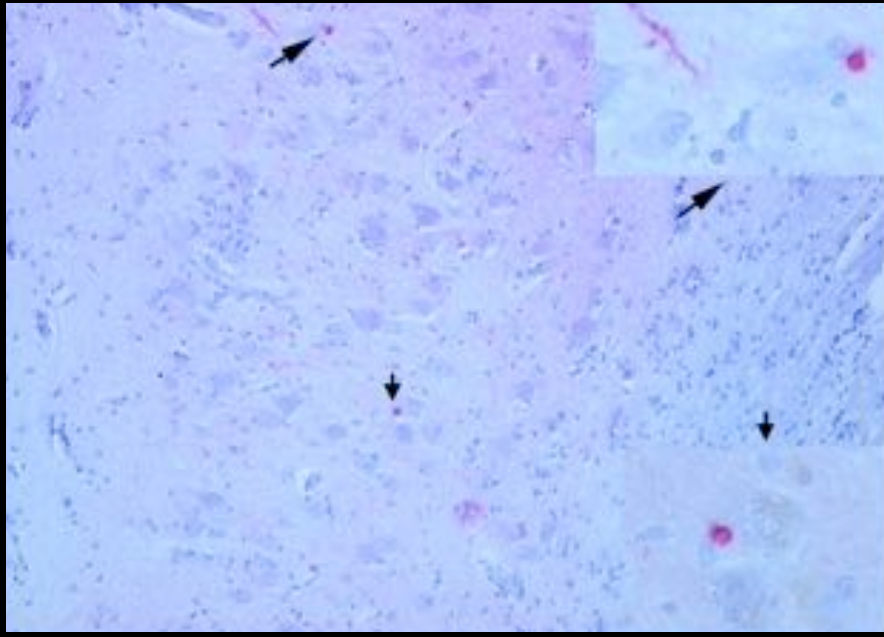
\* Linear regression models control for age, sex, education.



Alpha-Synuclein in substantia nigra



Alpha-Synuclein in hippocampus

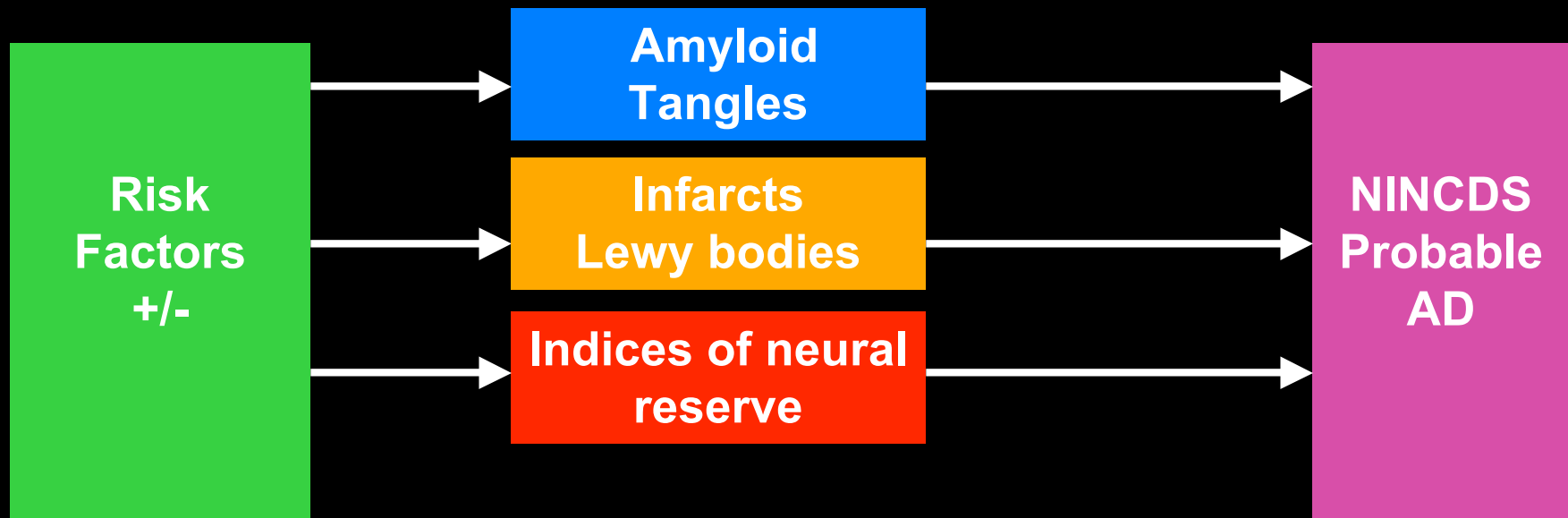


Alpha-Synuclein in neocortex

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- *There are no risk factors for AD*
- Factors lead to the accumulation of neuropathology and impair the structure and function of neural systems that subserve cognition
  - Some factors associated with amyloid and tangles
  - Others with CVD or LBD
  - Others with indices of neural reserve
  - Others are early signs of neuropathology



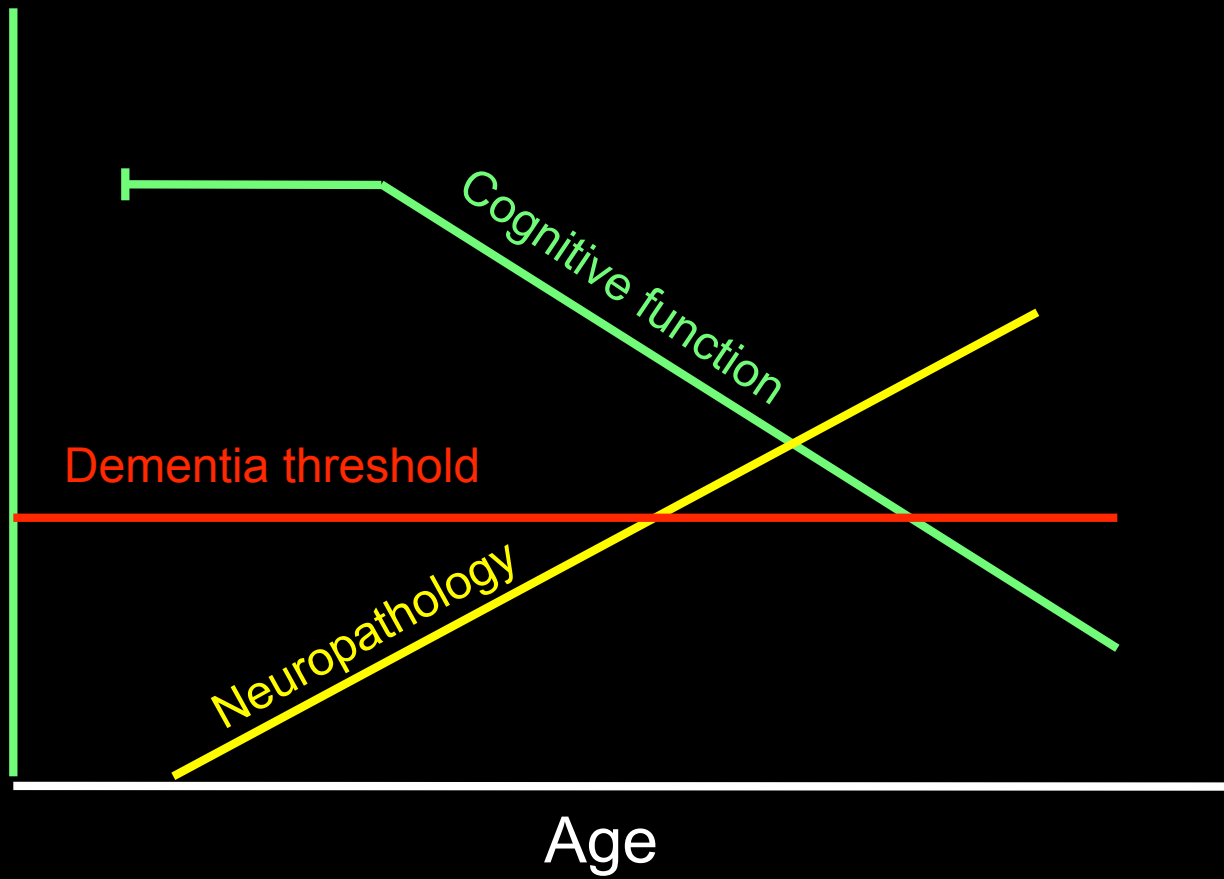
## Clinical AD is a complex function of:

- Multiple genetic and environmental factors that lead to the deposition of amyloid and formation of neurofibrillary tangles



## Clinical AD is a complex function of:

- Multiple genetic and environmental factors that lead to the deposition of amyloid and formation of neurofibrillary tangles
- Over time, the accumulation of AD pathology is accompanied by structural and functional changes in neural systems that subserve memory and other cognitive abilities



## Concept of Neural Reserve:

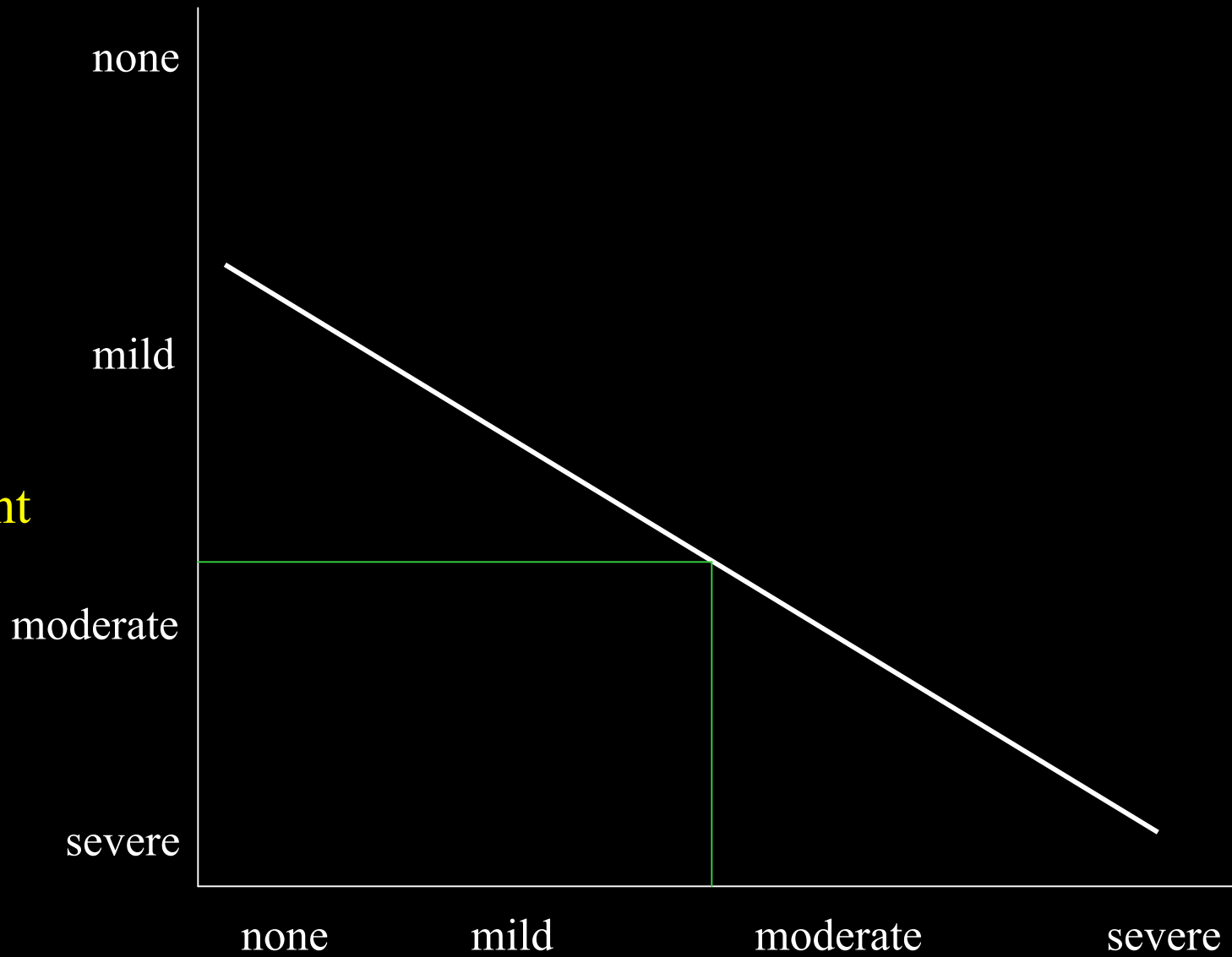
- AD pathology accumulates within individual brains that differ in their capacity to withstand the deleterious effects that accompany these lesions

## Concept of Neural Reserve:

- AD pathology accumulates within individual brains that differ in their capacity to withstand the deleterious effects that accompany these lesions
- Imperfect correspondence between amount of AD pathology and level of cognition

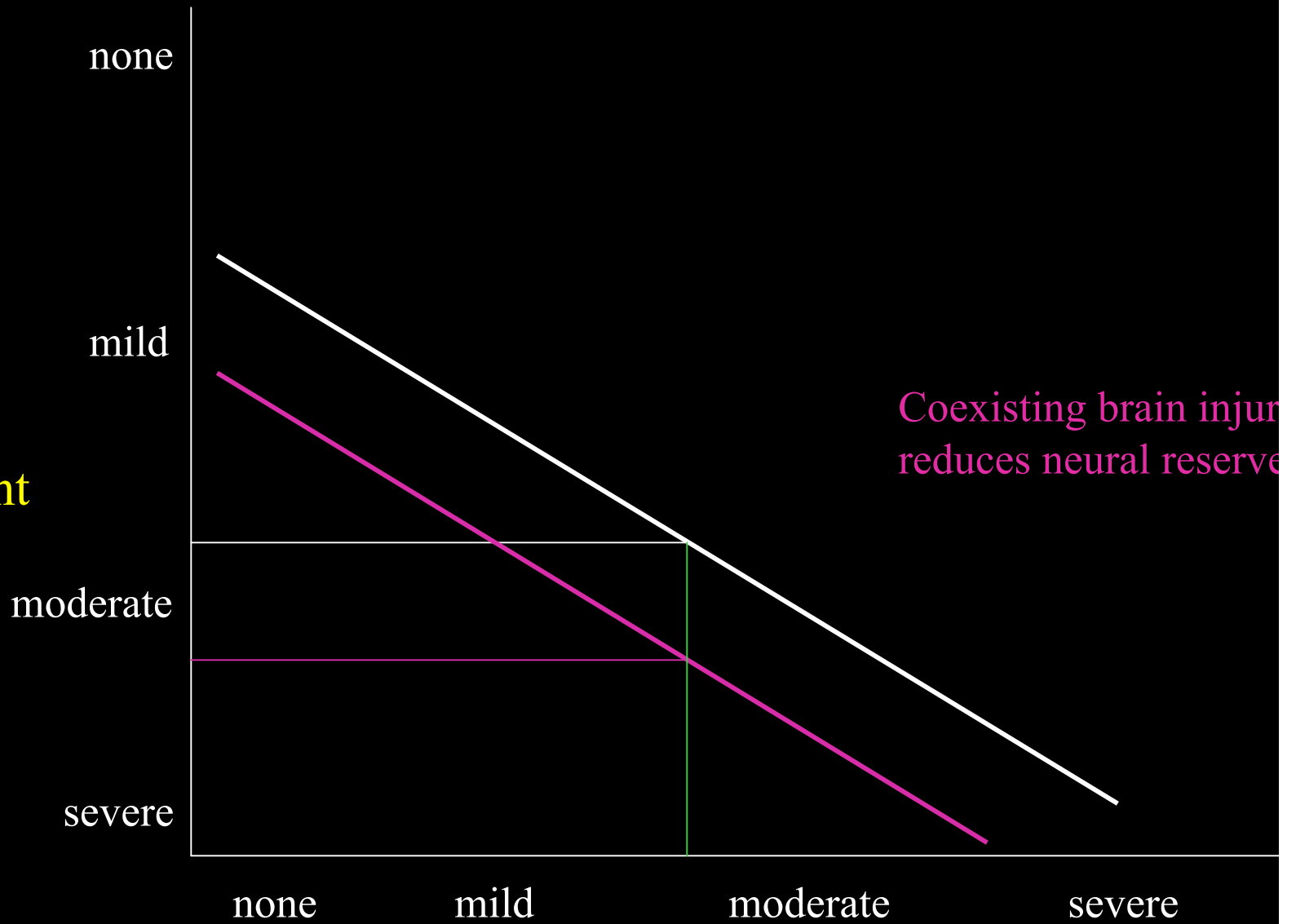


**cognitive  
impairment**



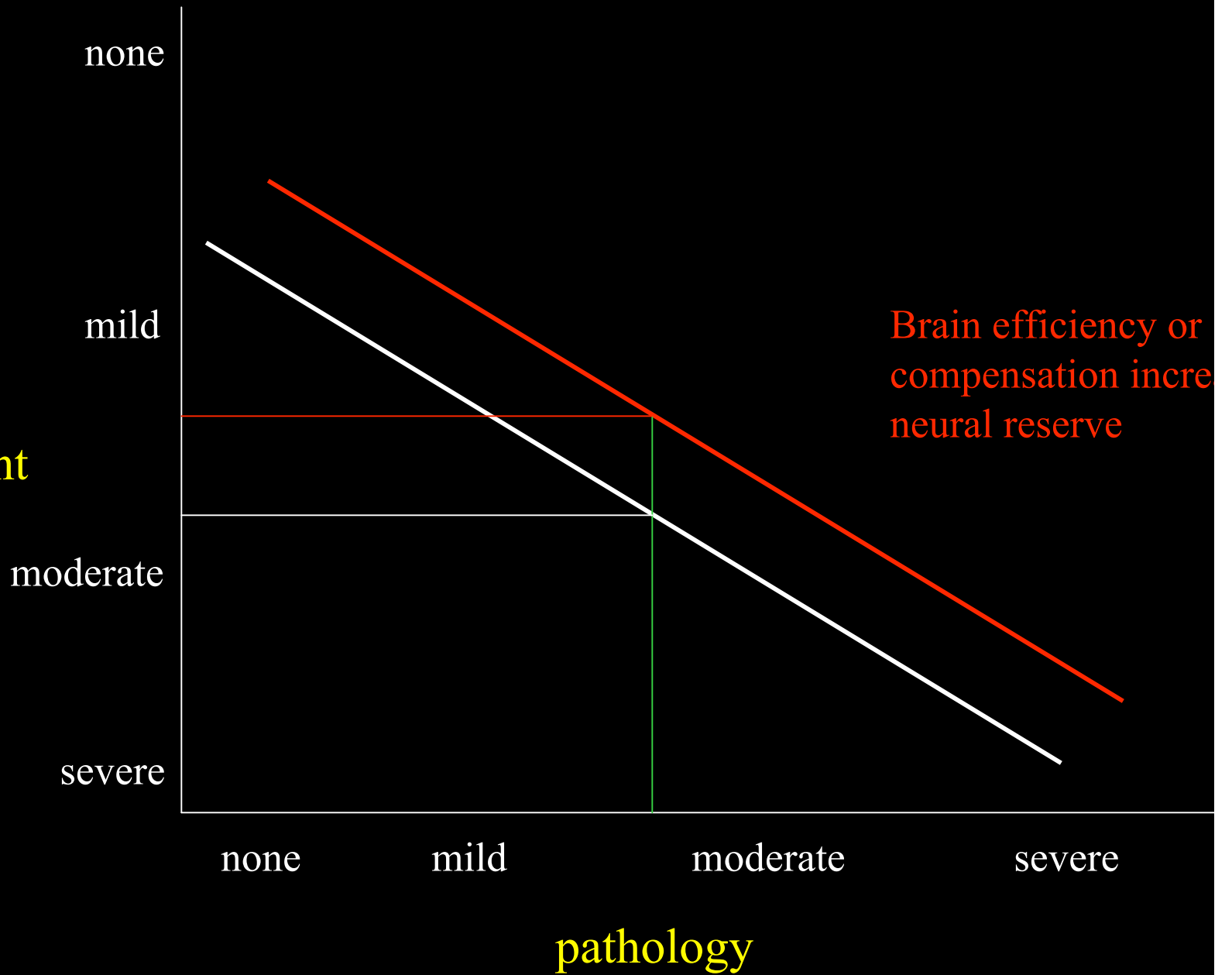
**pathology**

**cognitive  
impairment**



**pathology**

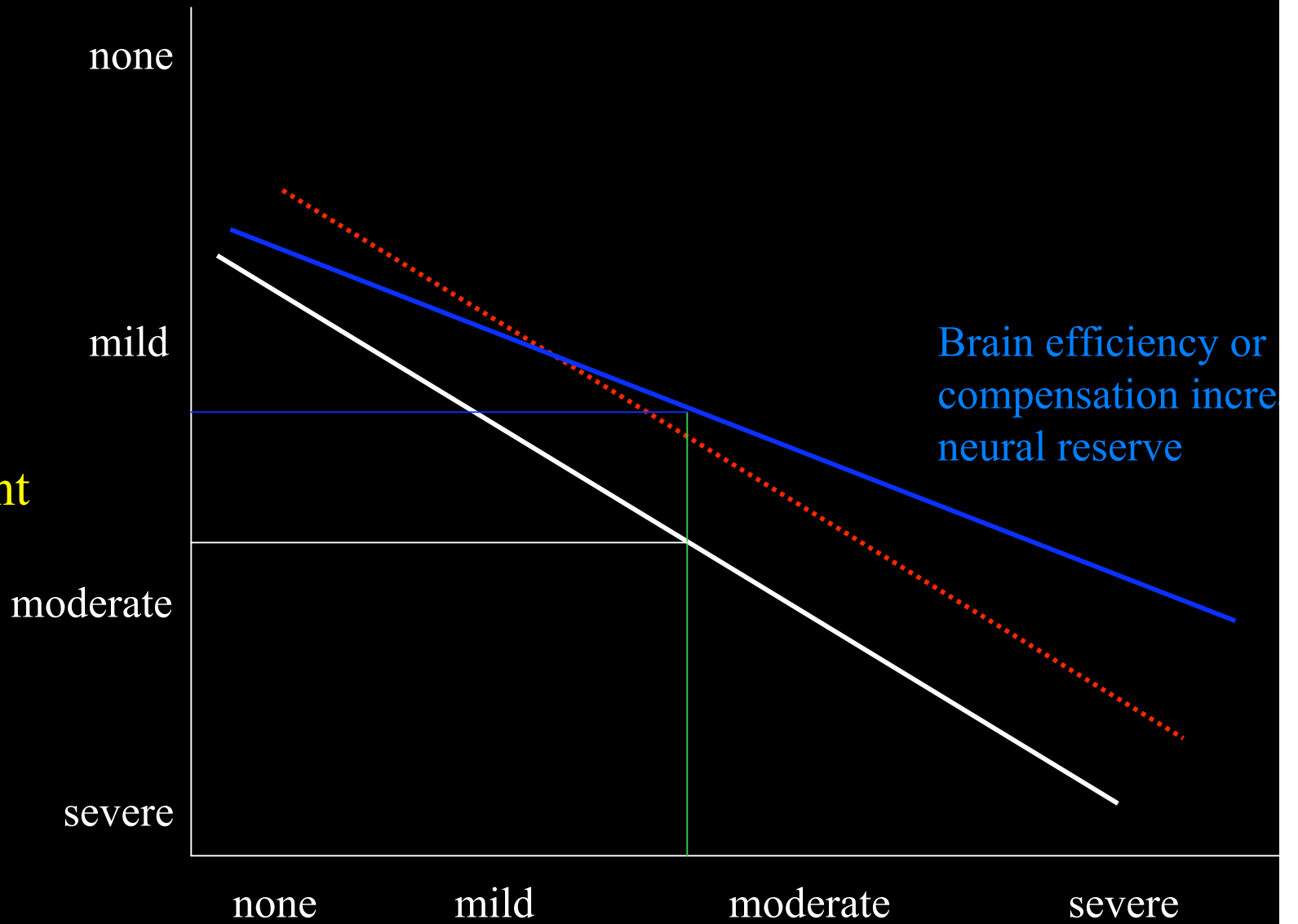
**cognitive  
impairment**



**Brain efficiency or  
compensation incre  
neural reserve**

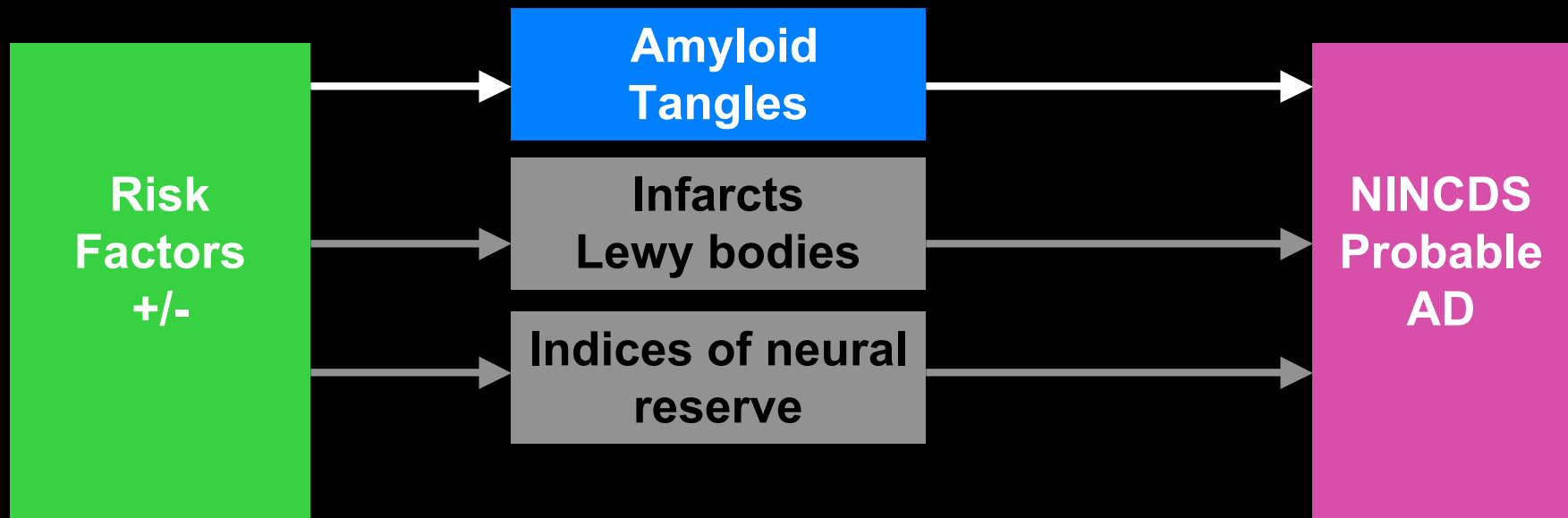
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**cognitive  
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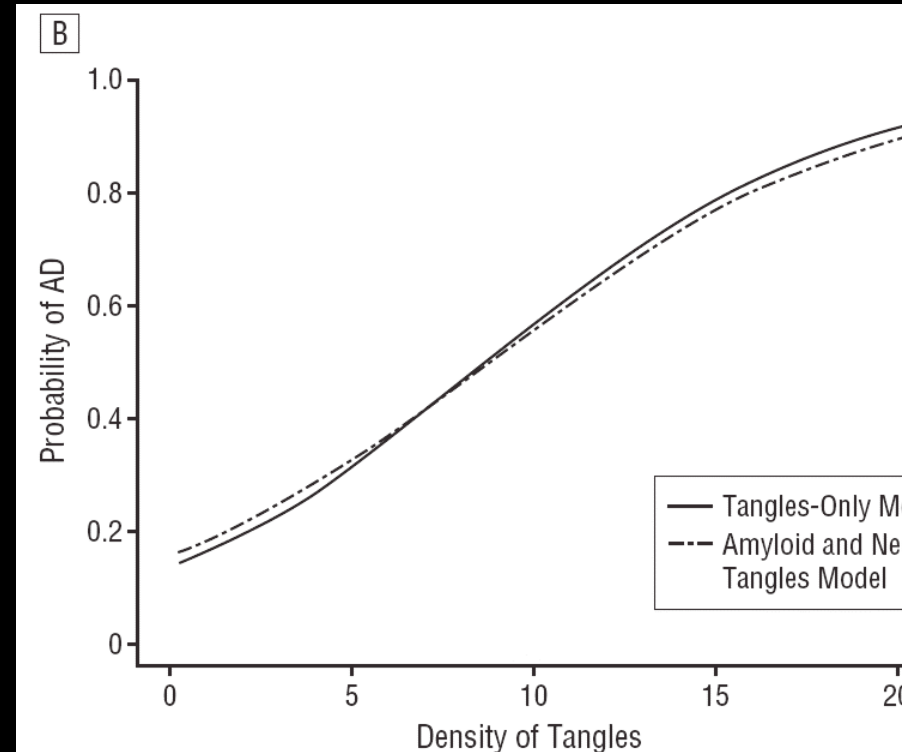
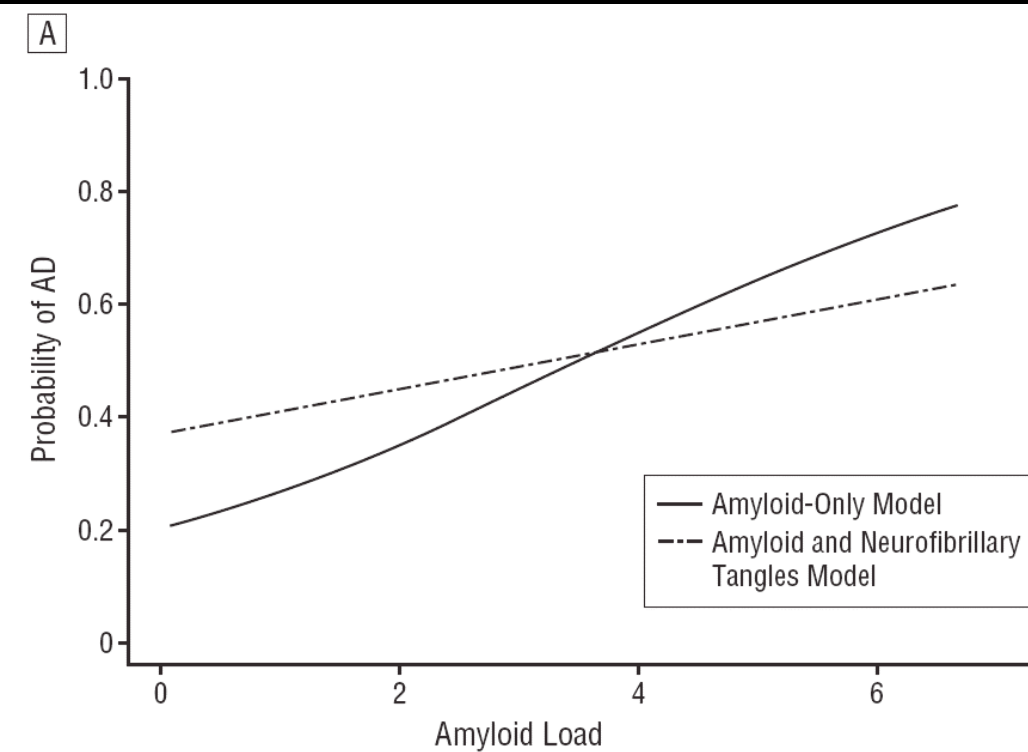
**Apolipoprotein E  $\epsilon$ 4 allele, AD pathology,  
and the clinical expression of  
Alzheimer's disease**

Pathologic indices	Terms	Model 1 Odds (95% CI)
Global pathology	$\epsilon$ 4 allele	3.46 (1.44–8.33)
	Pathology	—

**Apolipoprotein E  $\epsilon$ 4 allele, AD pathology,  
and the clinical expression of  
Alzheimer's disease**

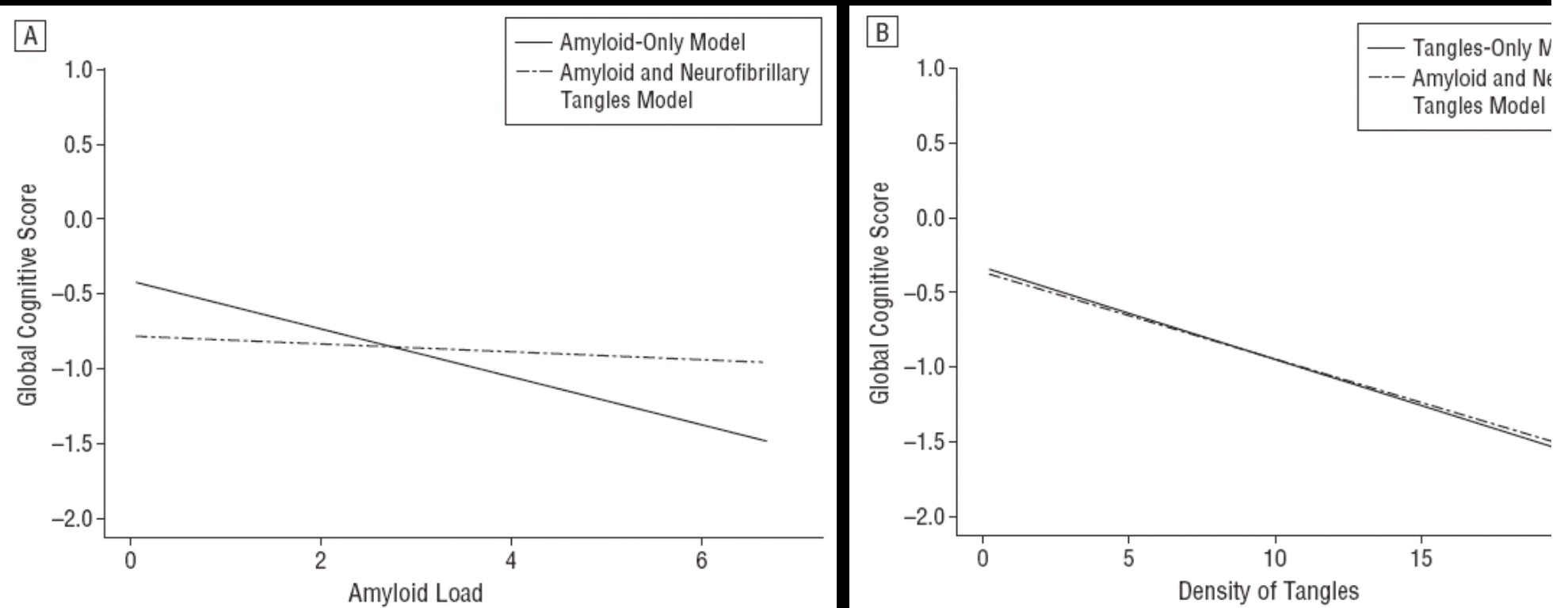
Pathologic indices	Terms	Model 1 Odds (95% CI)	Model 2 Odds (95% CI)
Global pathology	$\epsilon$ 4 allele	3.46 (1.44–8.33)	1.58 (0.56–4.4)
	Pathology	—	6.02 (2.59–13.8)

# Neurofibrillary Tangles Mediate the Association of Amyloid Load With Clinical Alzheimer Disease and Level of Cognitive Function

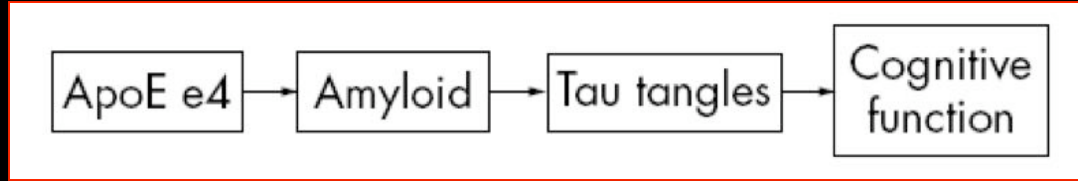




# Neurofibrillary Tangles Mediate the Association of Amyloid Load With Clinical Alzheimer Disease and Level of Cognitive Function



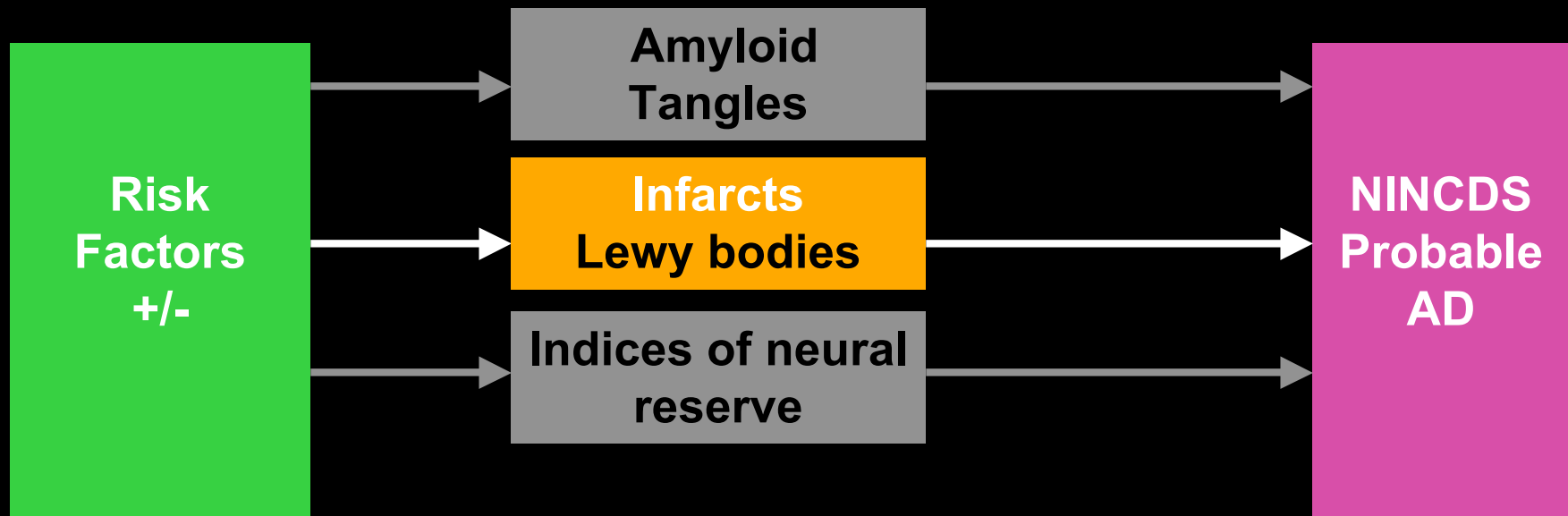
Amyloid mediates the association of apolipoprotein E e4 allele to cognitive function in older people



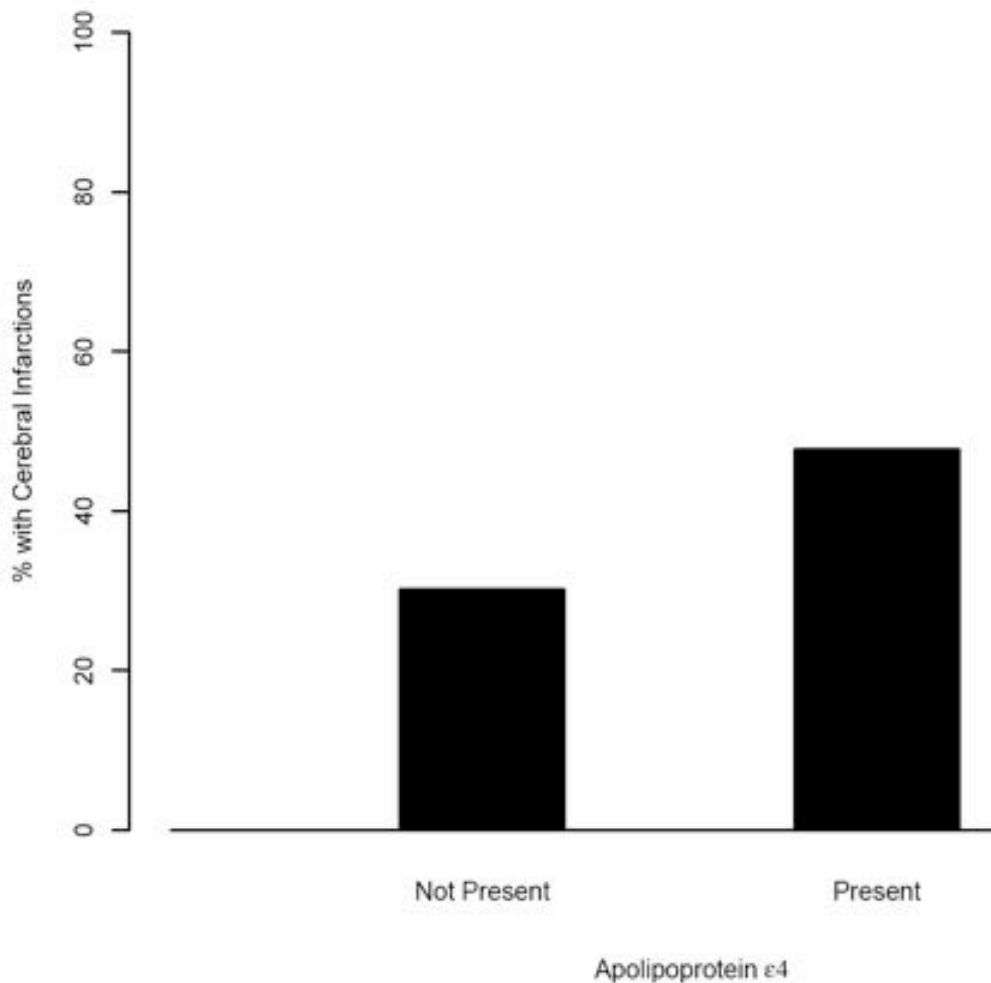
Outcome measure terms	Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate (SE)	p value	Estimate (SE)	p value
GC				
e4 allele	-0.432 (0.210)	0.04	-0.176 (0.214)	0.41
Amyloid load	-	-	-0.145 (0.044)	0.001

Outcome measure terms	Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate (SE)	p value	Estimate (SE)	p value
Tau tangles				
e4 allele	6.98 (2.21)	0.002	3.39 (2.13)	0.12
Amyloid load	-	-	2.04 (0.44)	<0.001

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# The Apolipoprotein E $\epsilon$ 4 Allele Increases the Odds of Chronic Cerebral Infarction Detected at Autopsy in Older Persons

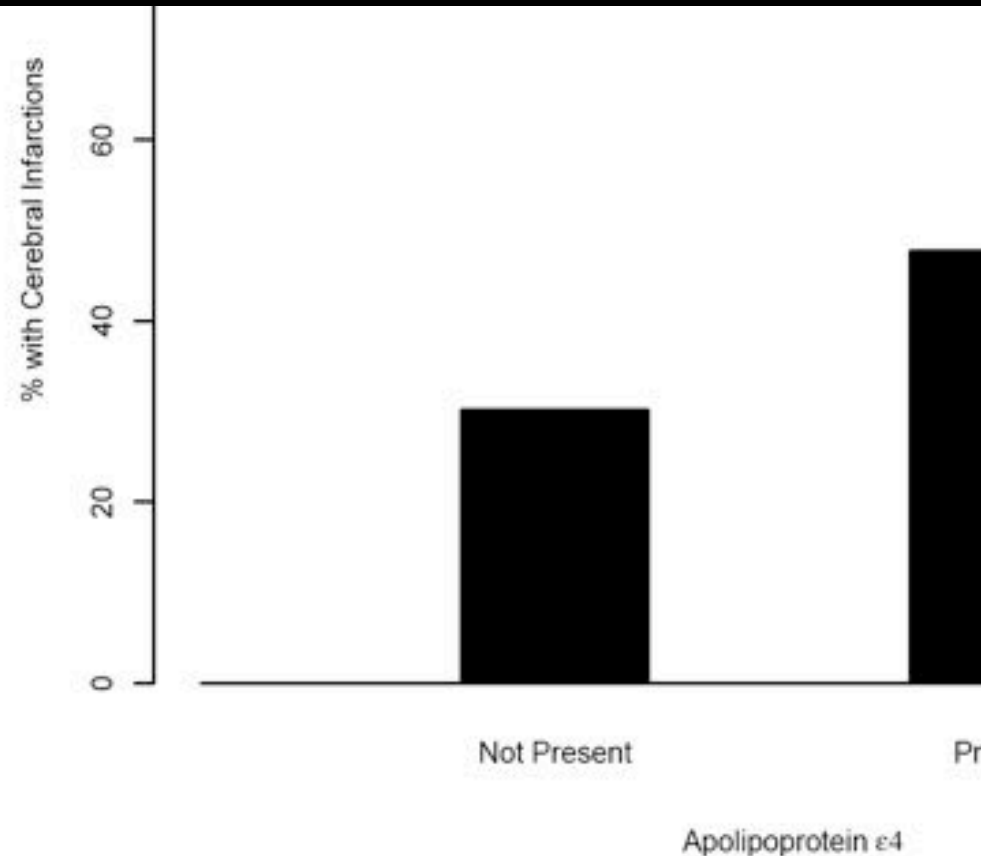


Outcomes*	Odds (95% CI)
Any cerebral infarction	2.3 (1.1-4.5)
Subcortical infarction	2.3 (1.1-4.5)
Cortical infarction	3.2 (1.6-6.5)



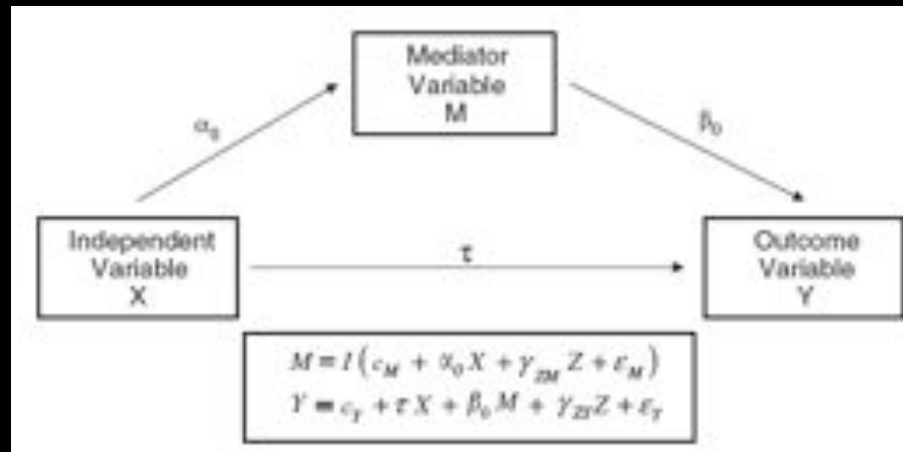
## The Apolipoprotein E $\epsilon 4$ Allele Increases the Odds of Chronic Cerebral Infarction Detected at Autopsy in Older Persons

Outcomes*	Odds Ratios (95% CI)
Any cerebral infarction	2.3 (1.2–4.2)
Subcortical infarction	2.3 (1.2–4.5)
Cortical infarction	3.2 (1.3–7.7)
1 infarction	2.1 (1.0–4.6)
Multiple infarctions	2.5 (1.2–5.4)
Less than median volume	2.2 (1.0–4.7)
More than median volume	2.4 (1.1–5.1)



# Estimation of the mediation effect with a binary mediator<sup>†</sup>

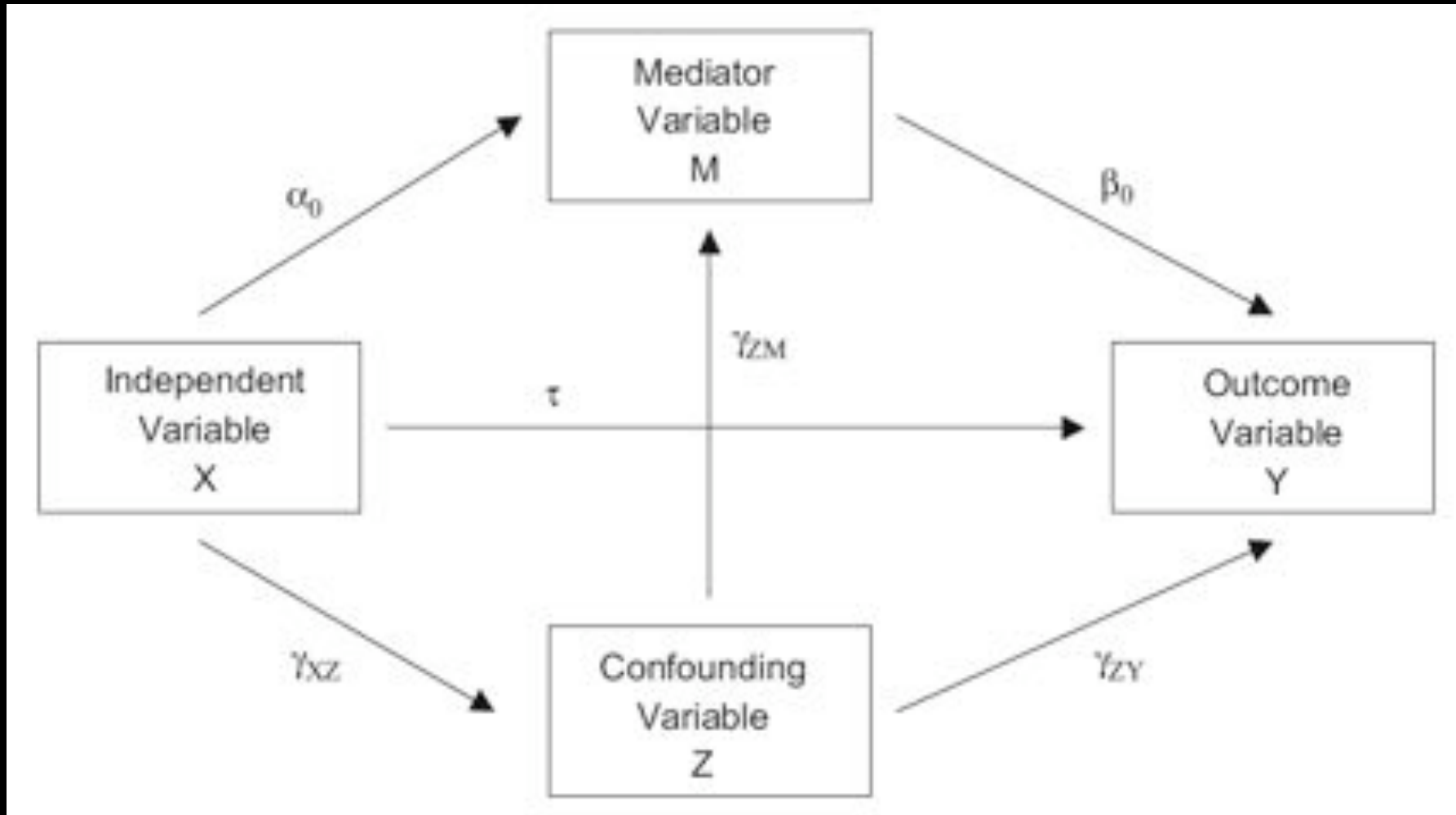
Path diagram for a mediation model with a binary mediator.

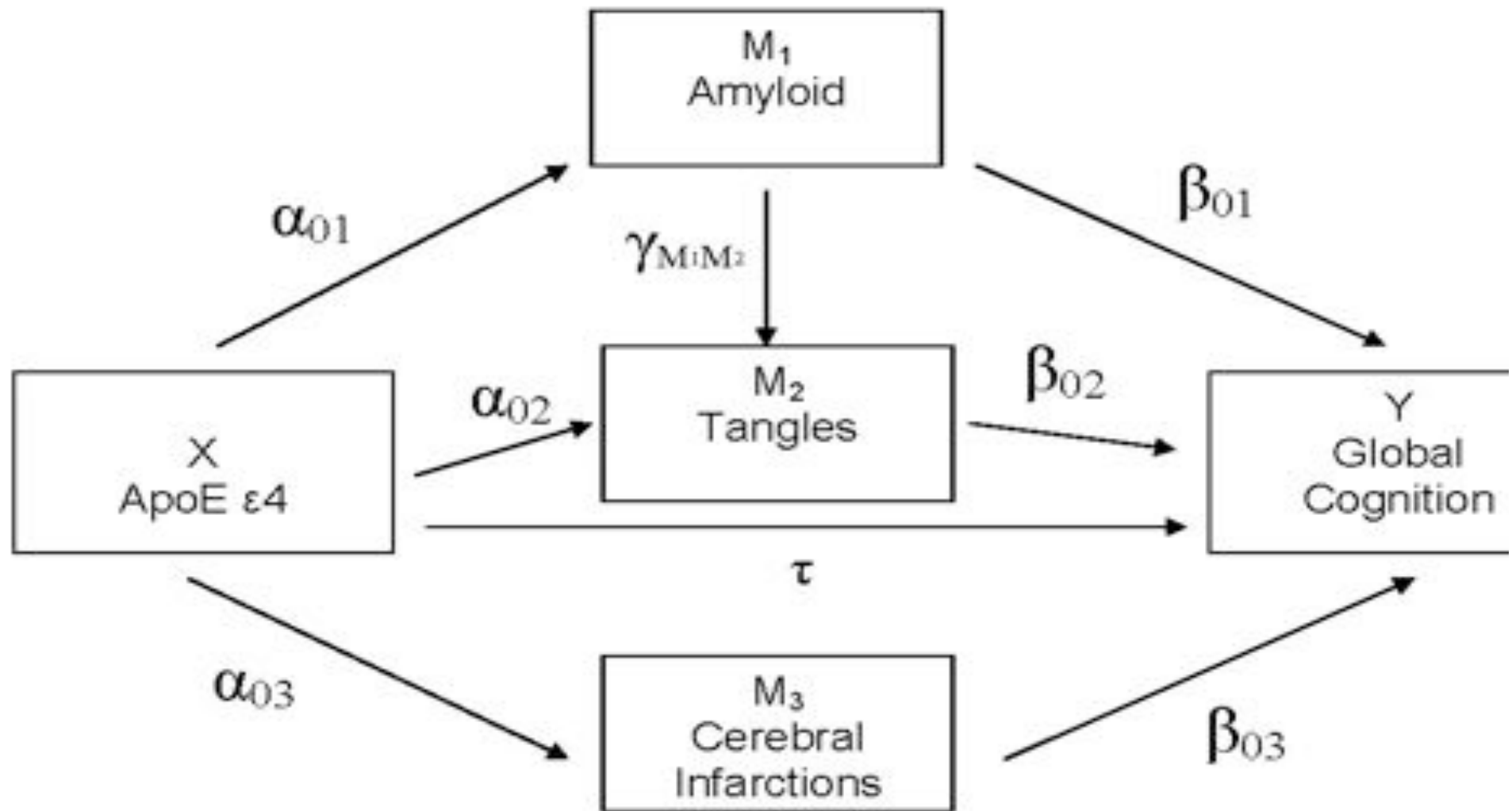


Dependent variable	Adjusted		Direct effect
	$\hat{\beta}_{Adj, Logit}$	$\hat{\beta}_{Adj, Probit}$	
Global cognition	-0.015 (-0.084, 0.046)	-0.015 (-0.084, 0.046)	-0.716 (-1.081, -0.388)
Episodic memory	-0.021 (-0.106, 0.060)	-0.022 (-0.106, 0.050)	-0.999 (-1.445, -0.573)
Semantic memory	-0.021 (-0.105, 0.060)	-0.021 (-0.106, 0.049)	-0.745 (-1.182, -0.362)
Working memory	-0.024 (-0.088, 0.029)	-0.025 (-0.089, 0.029)	-0.448 (-0.767, -0.175)
Perceptual speed	-0.065 (-0.152, -0.004)	-0.065 (-0.153, -0.004)	-0.570 (-0.939, -0.252)
Perceptual organization	-0.018 (-0.074, 0.032)	-0.018 (-0.074, 0.032)	-0.381 (-0.676, -0.081)

Li Y, et al. *Stat Med* 2007; 26:3398-414.

# Confounding in the estimation of mediation effects





# Estimation of the Mediation Effects through Multiple Pathways



## Religious Order Study

Total = -0.77 (-1.10, -0.45)

Direct = -0.30 (-0.63, 0.02)

Mediation = -0.46 (-0.66, -0.29)

## Memory and Aging Project

Total = -0.85 (-1.23, -0.43)

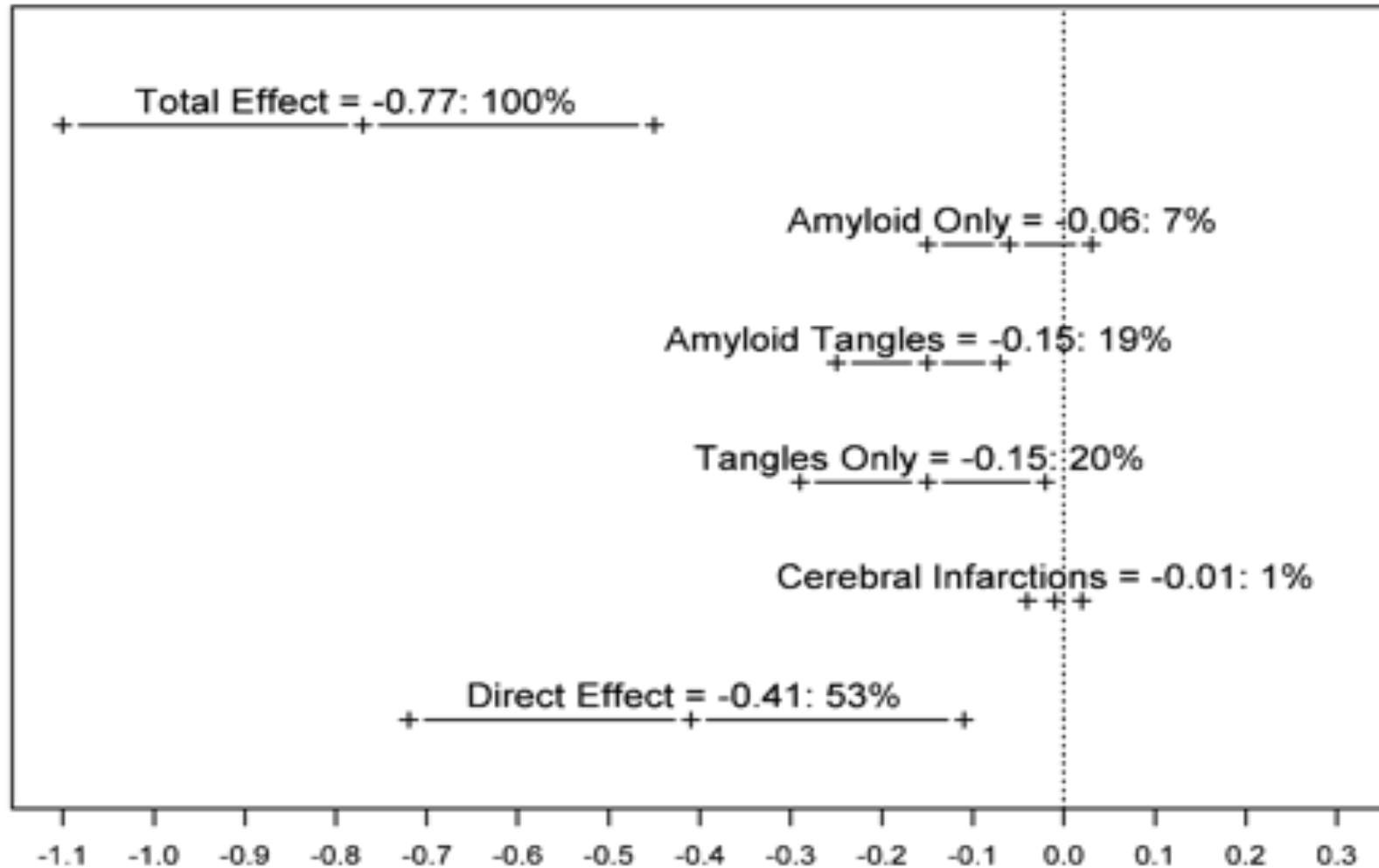
Direct = -0.29 (-0.72, 0.14)

Mediation = -0.56 (-0.85, -0.27)

Models control for age, sex, education,  
and cerebral infarctions



# ApoE $\epsilon 4 \rightarrow$ Global Cognition



*Anye2--> amyloid, tangles, amyloid & tangles --> DV*

DV	TOTAL	DIRECT	MEDIATION	AMYLOID	TANGLES	AMYLOID & TANGLES
Globcog _last	-0.020 (-0.413, 0.357)	-0.128 (-0.498, 0.203)	0.109 (-0.068, 0.292)	0.016 (-0.036, 0.081)	0.002 (-0.144, 0.152)	0.090 (0.023, 0.157)

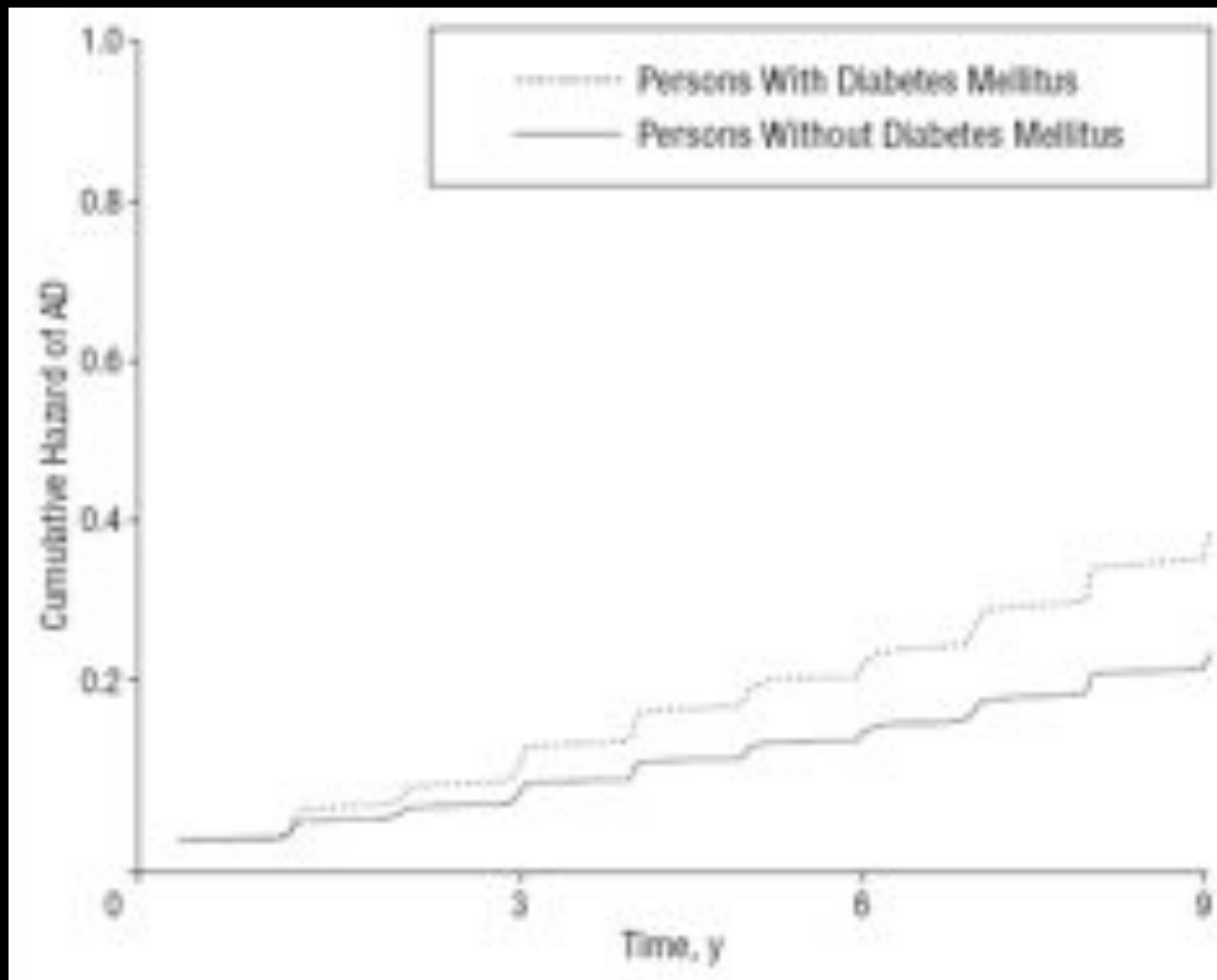
## *Anye2--> amyloid, tangles, amyloid & tangles --> DV*

DV	TOTAL	DIRECT	MEDIATION	AMYLOID	TANGLES	AMYLOID & TANGLES
Globcog _last	-0.020 (-0.413, 0.357)	-0.128 (-0.498, 0.203)	0.109 (-0.068, 0.292)	0.016 (-0.036, 0.081)	0.002 (-0.144, 0.152)	<b>0.090</b> ( <b>0.023, 0.157</b> )
Cog_ep _last	0.106 (-0.387, 0.576)	-0.038 (-0.491, 0.390)	0.144 (-0.077, 0.381)	0.028 (-0.046, 0.124)	0.003 (-0.174, 0.191)	<b>0.113</b> ( <b>0.030, 0.196</b> )
Cog_se _last	-0.178 (-0.588, 0.210)	-0.263 (-0.657, 0.082)	0.085 (-0.093, 0.269)	-0.013 (-0.084, 0.054)	0.002 (-0.156, 0.160)	<b>0.096</b> ( <b>0.026, 0.166</b> )
Cog_ps _last	-0.108 (-0.537, 0.293)	-0.201 (-0.637, 0.193)	0.093 (-0.022, 0.241)	0.042 (-0.022, 0.143)	0.001 (-0.076, 0.094)	<b>0.050</b> ( <b>0.012, 0.088</b> )
Cog_po _last	-0.084 (-0.409, 0.227)	-0.139 (-0.463, 0.161)	0.054 (-0.037, 0.165)	0.009 (-0.043, 0.075)	0.001 (-0.069, 0.075)	<b>0.044</b> ( <b>0.009, 0.079</b> )
Cog_wo _last	-0.120 (-0.445, 0.182)	-0.181 (-0.506, 0.108)	0.061 (-0.062, 0.185)	-0.001 (-0.052, 0.054)	0.001 (-0.101, 0.101)	<b>0.060</b> ( <b>0.015, 0.105</b> )



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

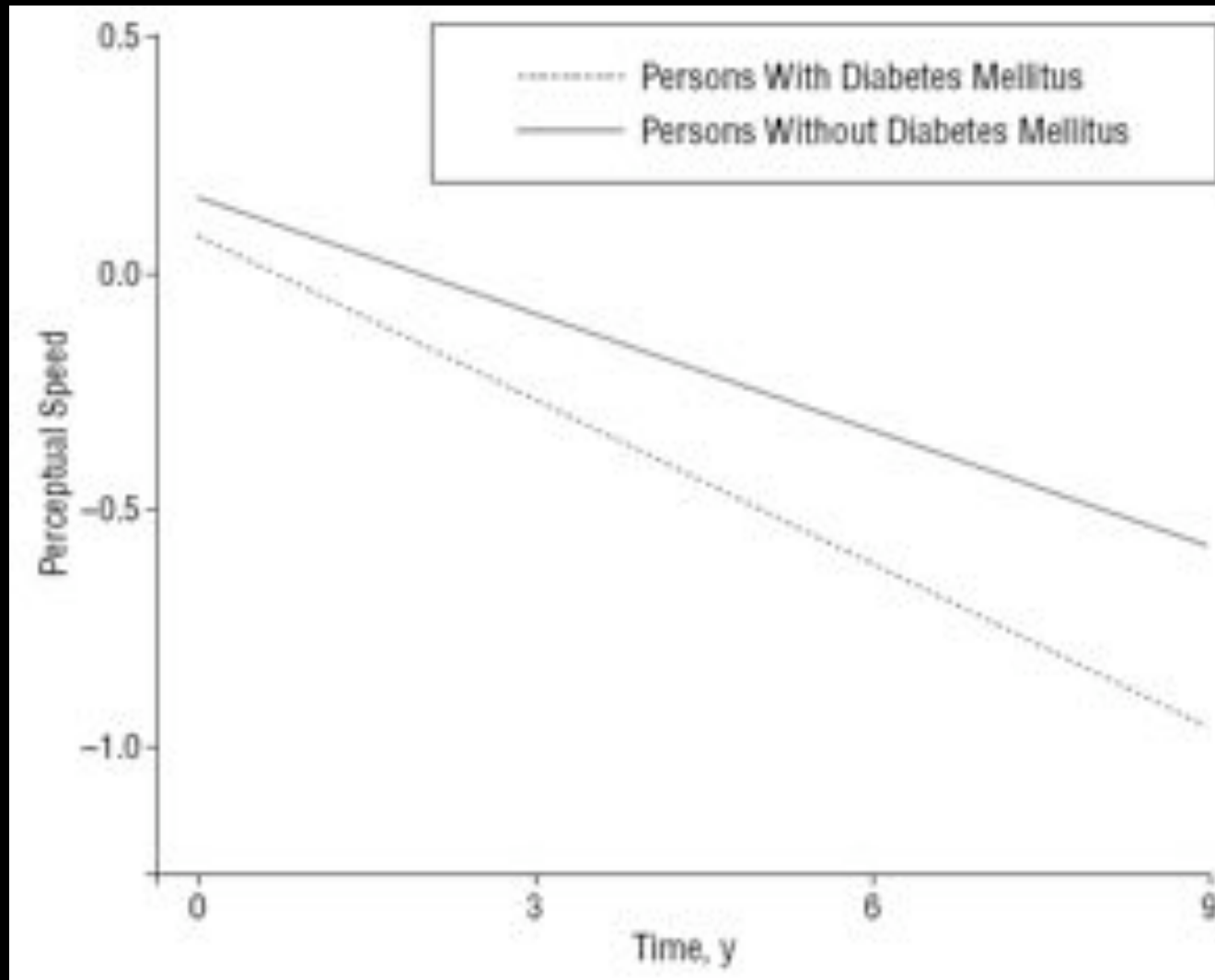
# Diabetes Mellitus and Risk of Alzheimer Disease and Decline in Cognitive Function



Arvanitakis Z, et al. *Archives Neurology* 2004;61:661-666.

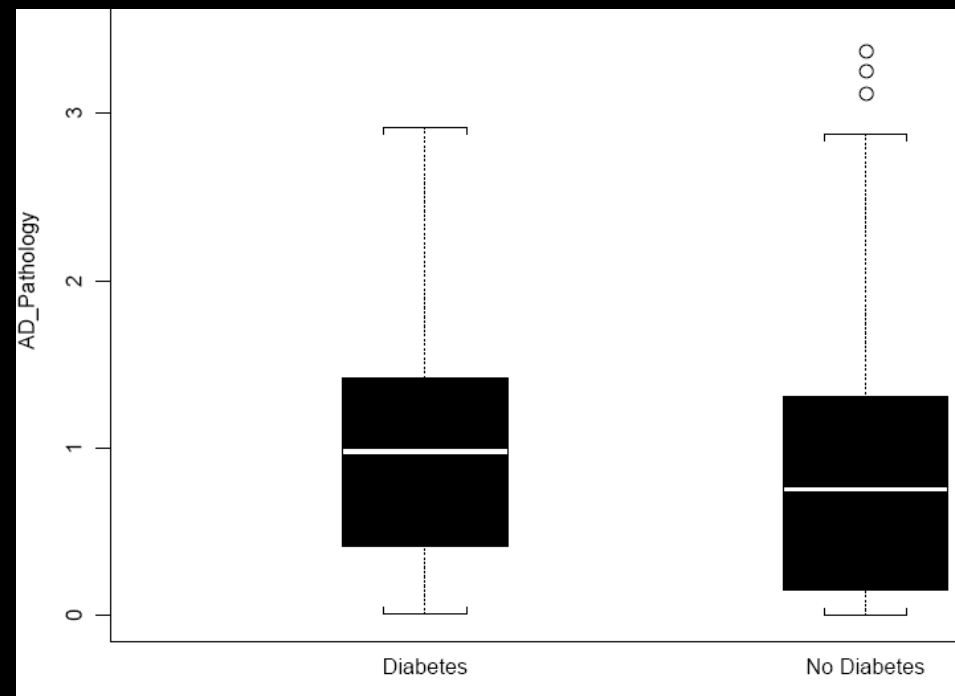


# Diabetes Mellitus and Risk of Alzheimer Disease and Decline in Cognitive Function



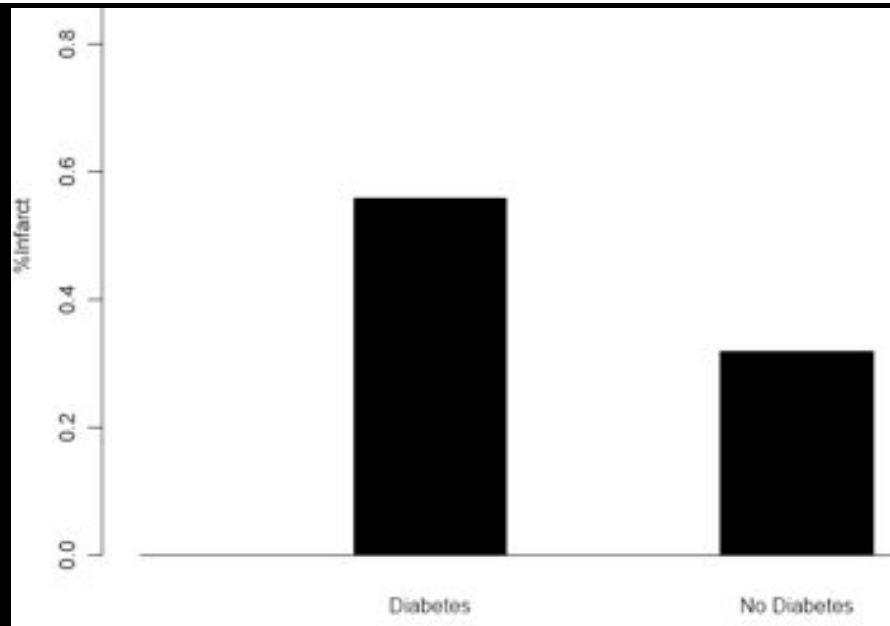
Arvanitakis Z, et al. *Archives Neurology* 2004;61:661-666.

# Diabetes is related to cerebral infarction but not to AD pathology in older persons



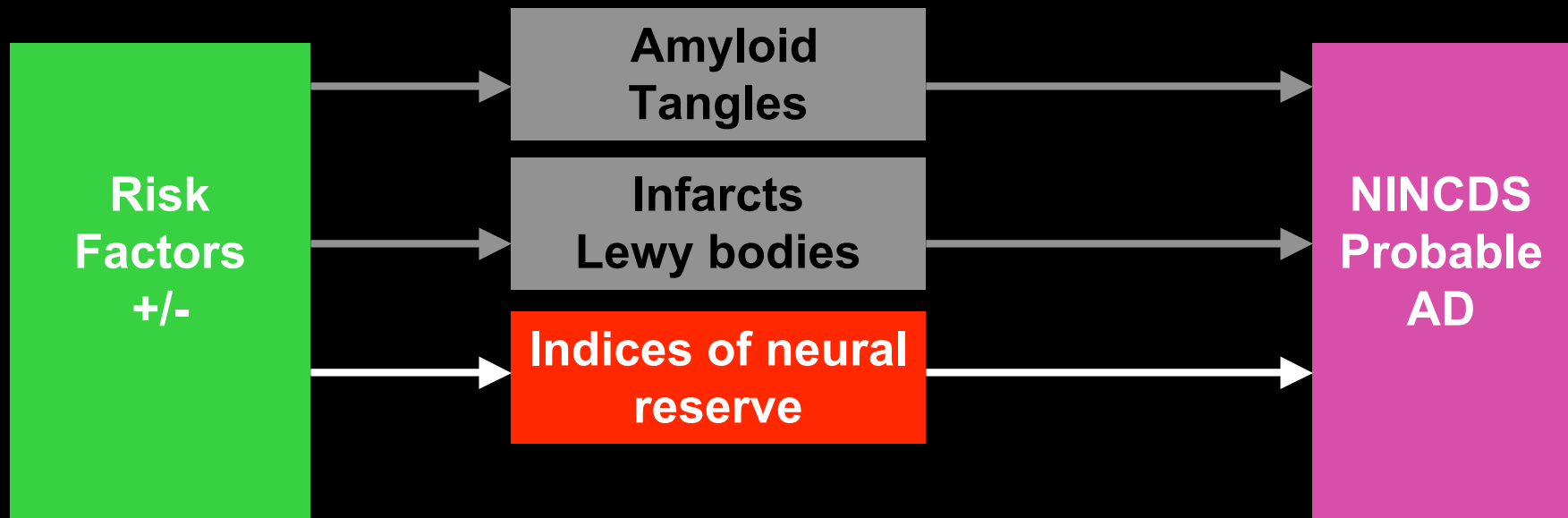
Pathologic marker	Variable estimate	Standard error
Overall level of AD pathology	0.01	0.12
Neuritic plaques	0.16	0.15
Diffuse plaques	-0.01	0.16
Neurofibrillary tangles	-0.13	0.13
Amyloid burden	-0.10	0.39
Tangle density	-0.61	1.45

# Diabetes is related to cerebral infarction but not to AD pathology in older persons



Pathologic marker	OR	95% CI
Cerebral infarction	2.47	1.16, 5.24
Cortical infarction	3.30	1.13, 9.63
Subcortical infarction	3.14	1.44, 6.83

- *There are no risk factors for AD*
- Factors lead to the accumulation of neuropathology and impair the structure and function of neural systems that subserve cognition
  - Some factors associated with amyloid and tangles
  - Others with CVD or LBD
  - Others with indices of neural reserve
  - Others are early signs of neuropathology



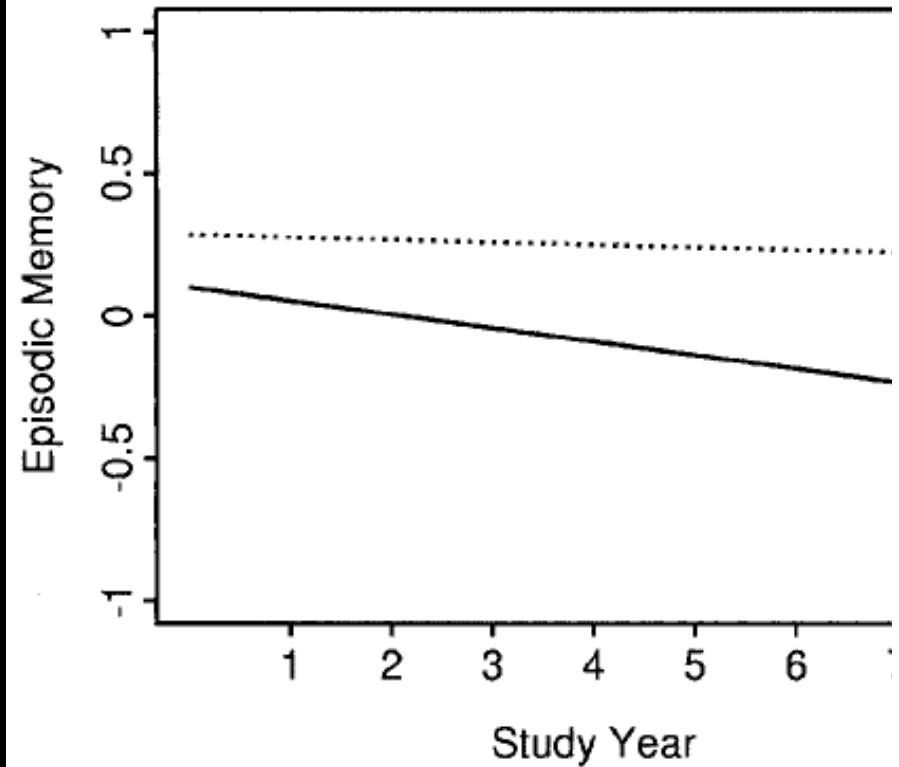
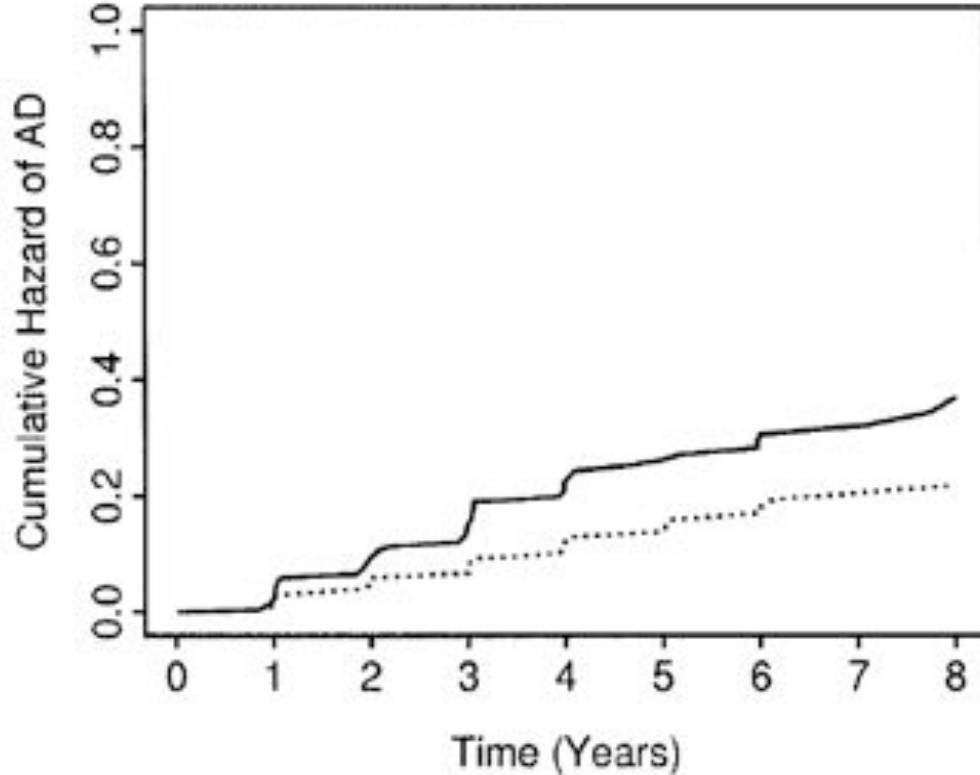
# Selected Psychosocial and Experiential Factors

- Additive effects
  - Distress proneness
  - Depressive symptoms
- Interactive effects
  - Years of education
  - Conscientiousness

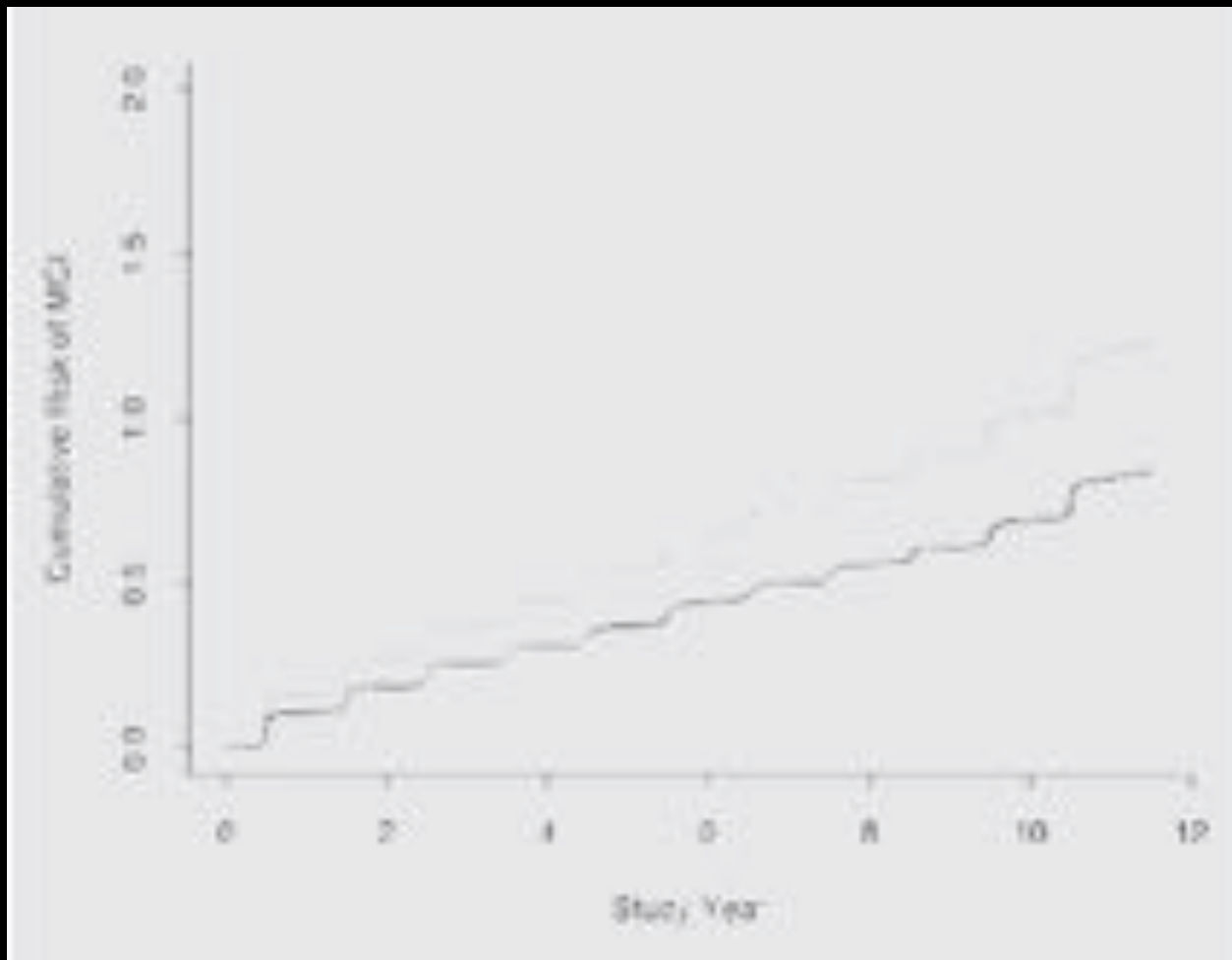


## Proneness to psychological distress is associated with risk of Alzheimer's disease

Neuroticism (NEO) refers to the disposition to experience psychological distress (I am not a worrier; I often feel tense and jittery; I often get angry at the way people treat me; I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems).

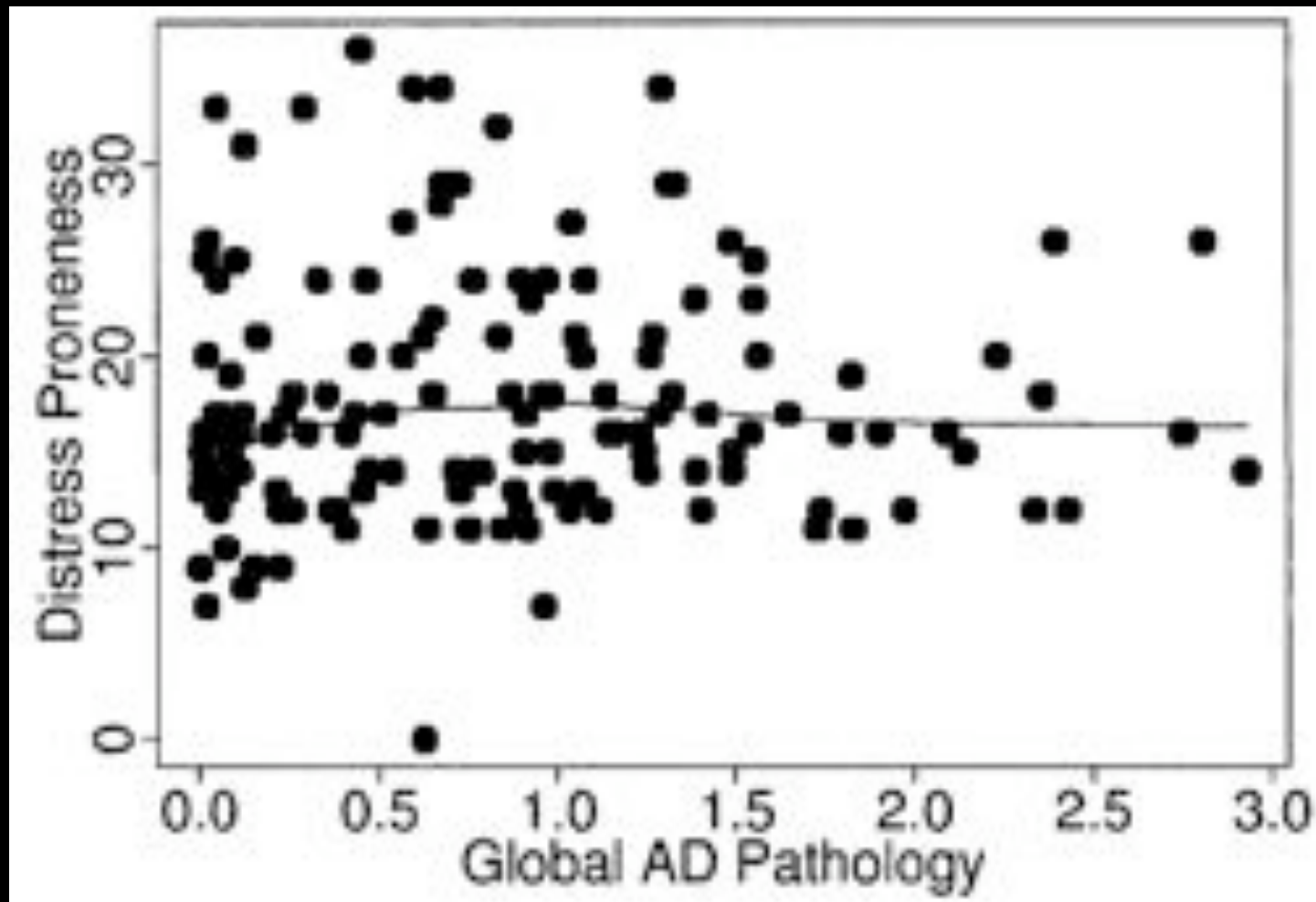


# Chronic distress and incidence of mild cognitive impairment



Wilson RS, et al. *Neurology* 2007;68:2085-92.

**Proneness to psychological distress  
is associated with risk of  
Alzheimer's disease**



Wilson RS, et al. *Neurology* 2003;61:1479-1485.

## Chronic Distress, Age-Related Neuropathology, and Late-Life Dementia

Model Term	Model A OR (95% CI)	Model B OR (95% CI)	Model C OR (95% CI)	Model D OR (95% CI)
Chronic distress	1.53 (1.17–1.99)			
Amyloid Tangles		1.41 (1.20–1.66)	1.15 (1.09–1.22)	
Infarct Infarcts				0.98 (0.49–1.91) 2.20 (1.13–4.28)

Model Term	Model E OR (95% CI)	Model F OR (95% CI)	Model G OR (95% CI)	Model H OR (95% CI)
Chronic distress	1.64 (1.20–2.22)	1.79 (1.31–2.46)	1.53 (1.17–1.99)	1.71 (1.20–2.44)
Amyloid Tangles	1.44 (1.21–1.70)	1.17 (1.10–1.23)		1.20 (0.97–1.48) 1.18 (1.09–1.28)
Infarct Infarcts			0.89 (0.43–1.83) 2.34 (1.18–4.62)	1.20 (0.44–3.33) 2.65 (1.07–6.64)

Wilson RS, et al. *Psychosomatic Med* 2007;69:47-53.

## Chronic Distress, Age-Related Neuropathology, and Late-Life Dementia

Anxiety was assessed with a 20-item modified version of the Anxiety Trait Scale from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory which queries about feelings of anxiety that are thought to be relatively stable over time (e.g., I feel nervous and restless.).

Cognitive Outcome	Trait Anxiety	
	Estimate (SE)	p Value
Episodic memory	-0.03 (0.02)	.189
Semantic memory	-0.05 (0.02)	.032
Working memory	-0.04 (0.02)	.006
Perceptual speed	-0.06 (0.02)	.003
Visuospatial ability	-0.07 (0.01)	<.001

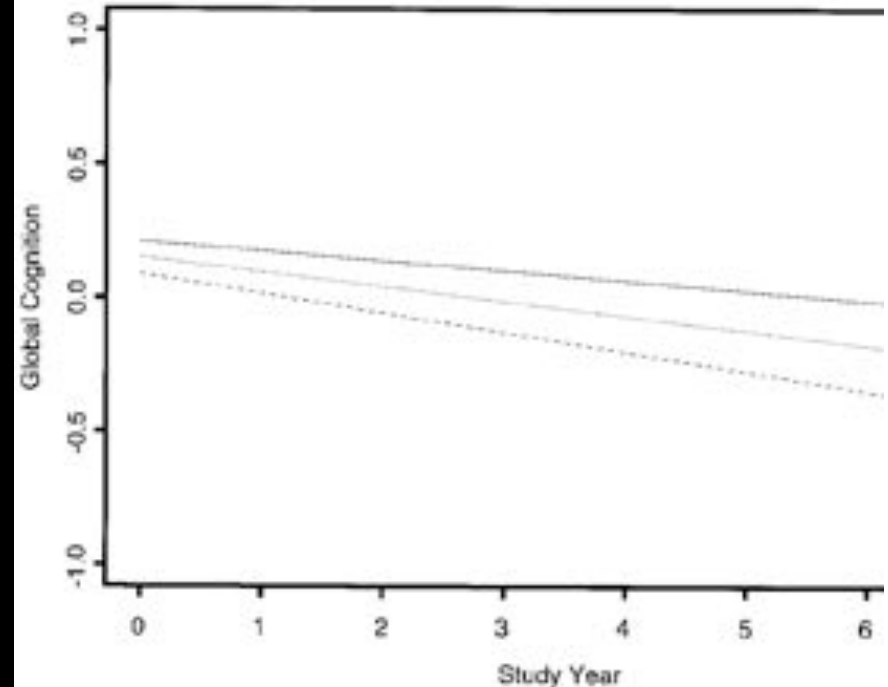
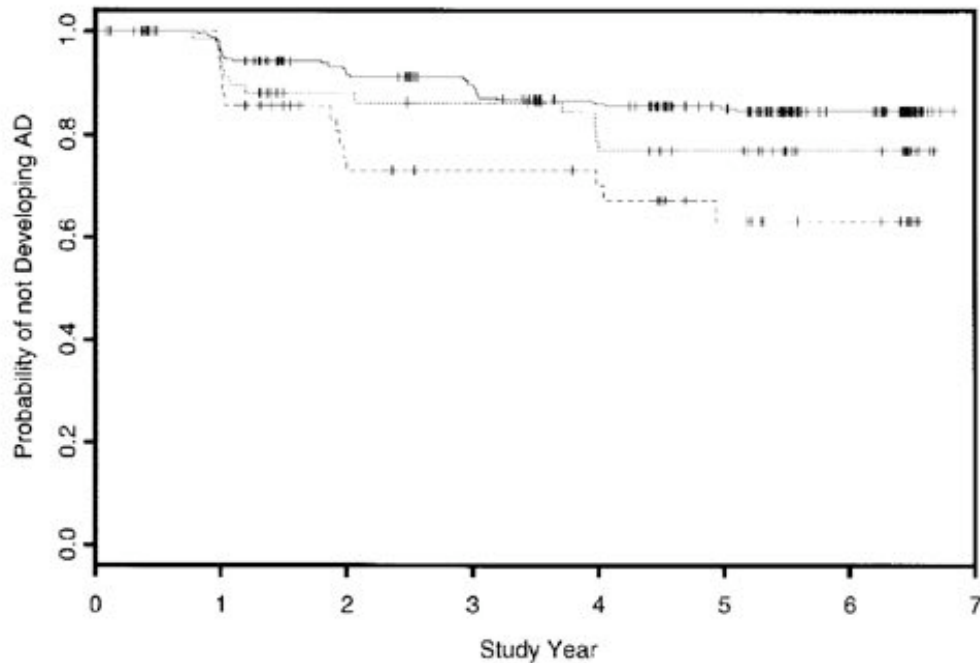
Separate linear regression models adjusted for age at death, gender, education, amyloid load, tangle density, cerebral infarction, and Lewy bodies.

Wilson RS, et al. *Psychosomatic Med* 2007;69:47-53.



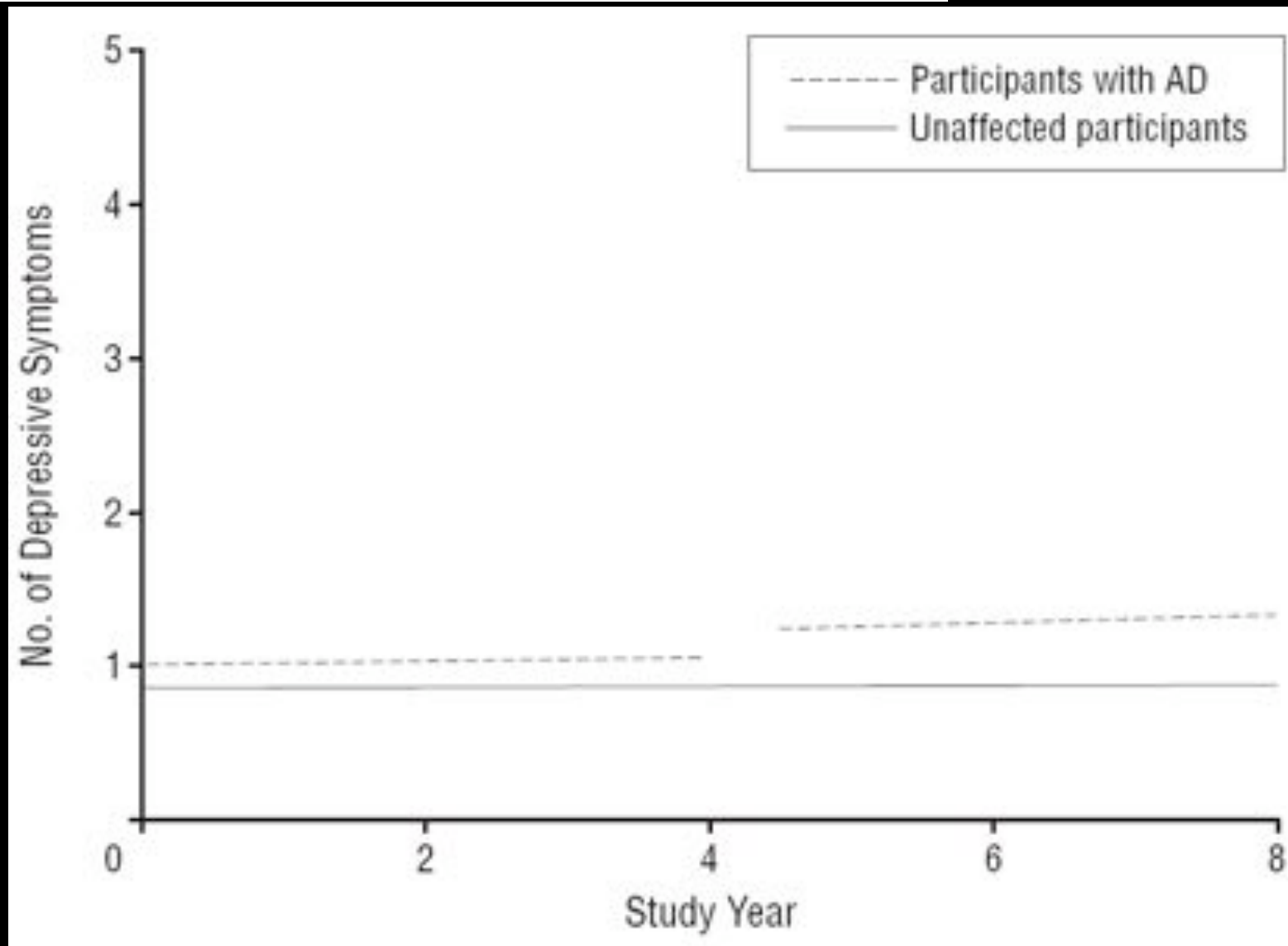
## Depressive symptoms, cognitive decline, and risk of AD in older persons

Depressive symptoms (CES-D) (e.g., I felt like everything was an effort, I felt depressed, I felt sad, I could not “get going”).



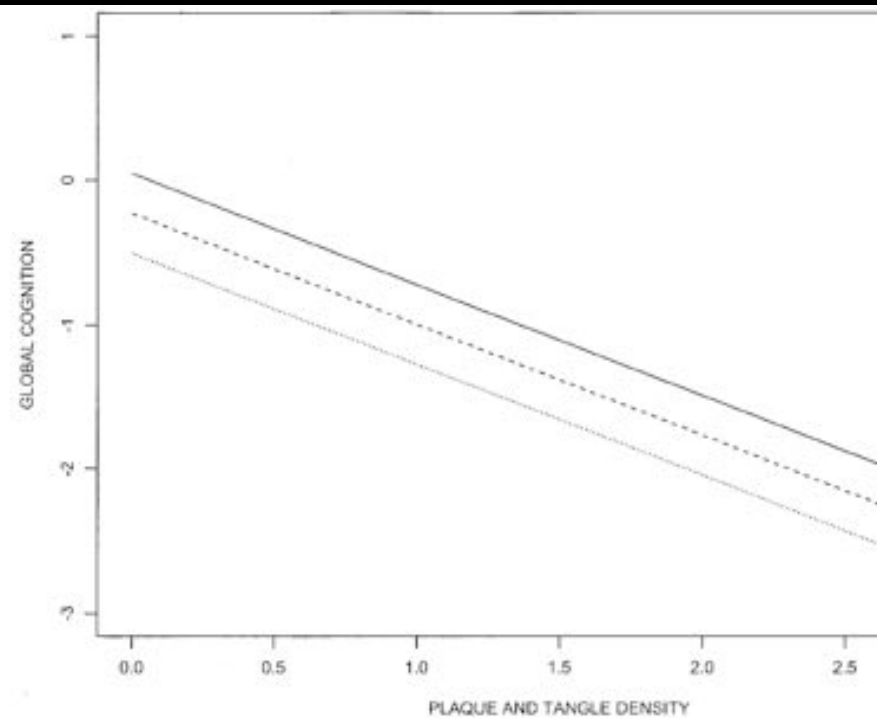
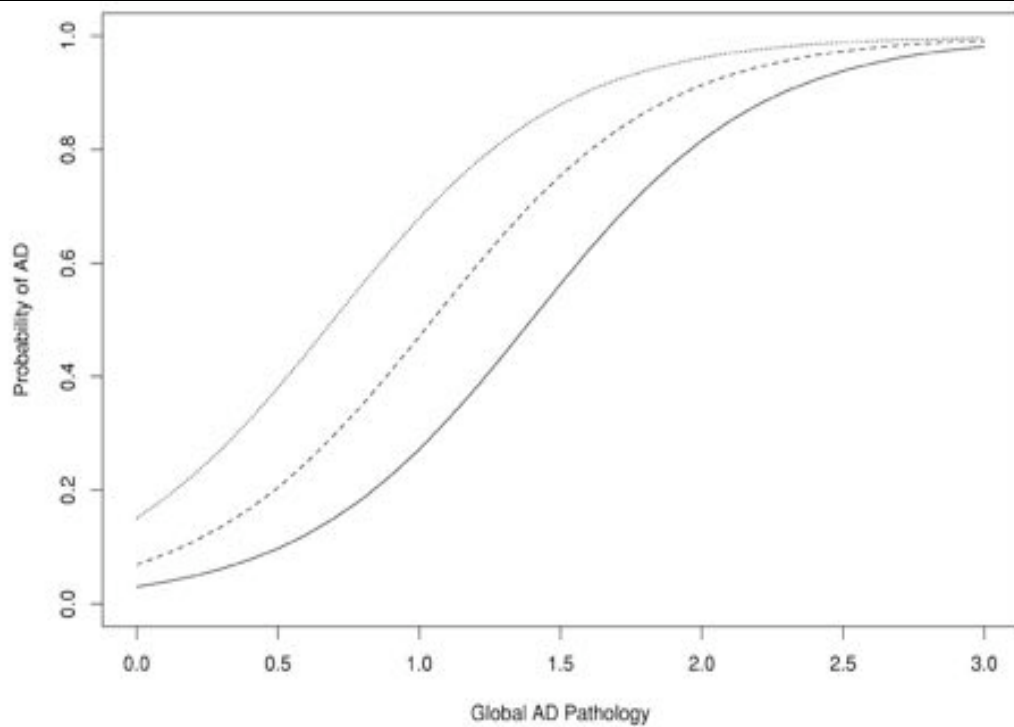


# Change in Depressive Symptoms During the Prodromal Phase of Alzheimer Disease

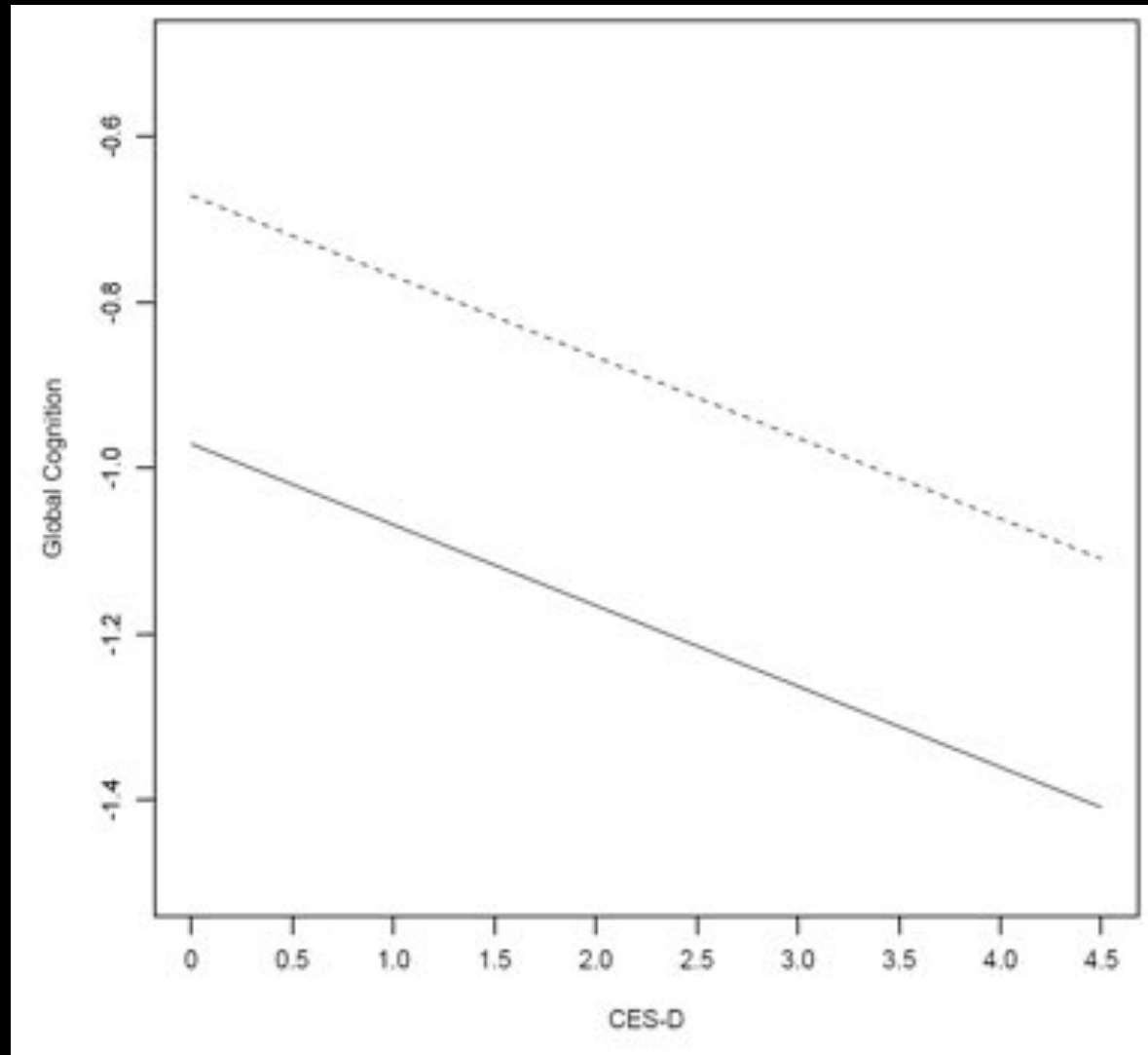


Wilson RS, et al. *Arch Gen Psych* 2007;64:1204-12.

## Depressive symptoms, clinical AD, and cortical plaques and tangles in older persons



# Cerebral Infarctions and the Relationship of Depression Symptoms to Level of Cognitive Functioning in Older Persons



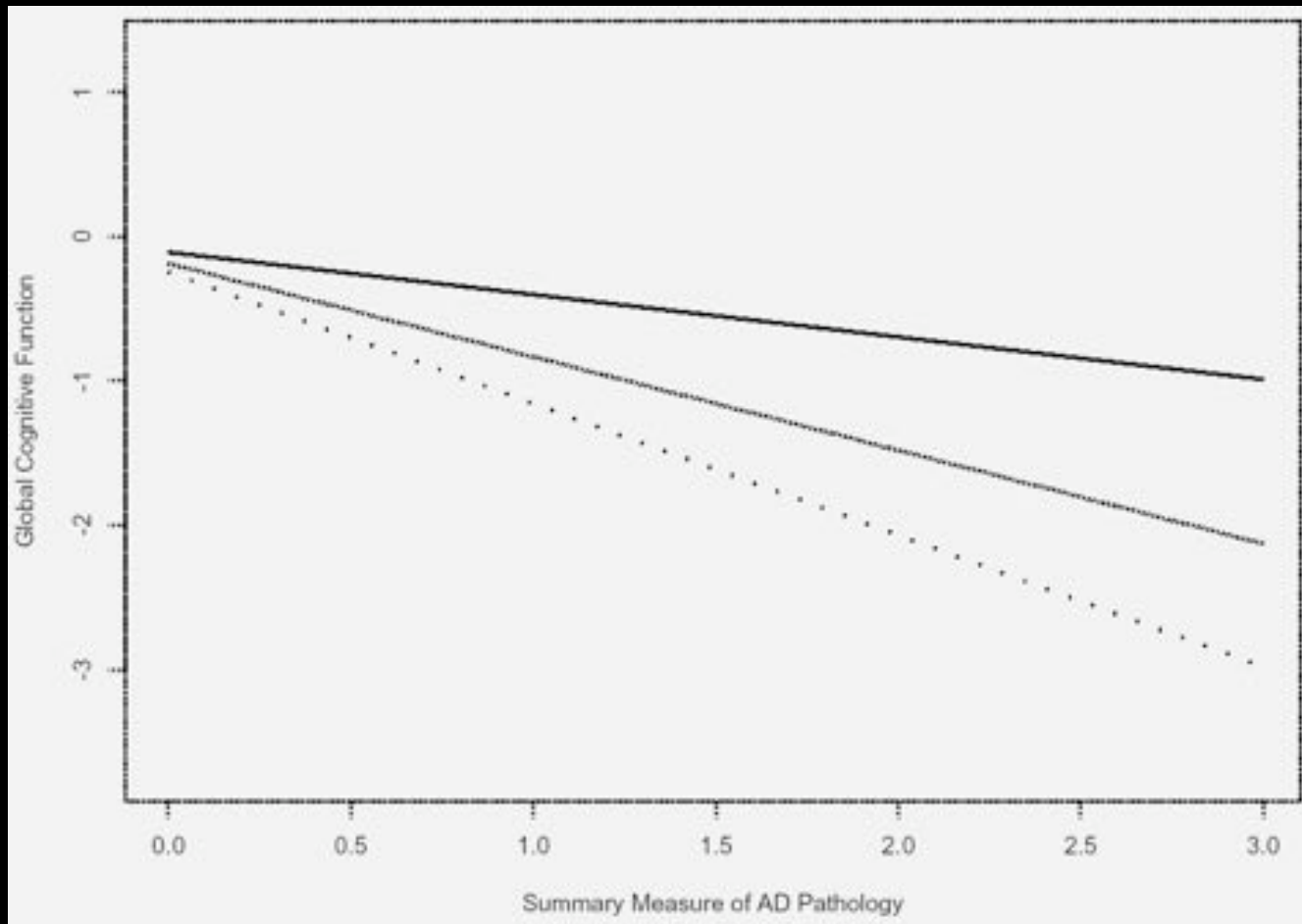
Bennett DA, et al. *Am J Geri Psych* 2004;12:211-219.

# Selected Psychosocial and Experiential Factors

- Additive effects
  - Distress proneness
  - Depressive symptoms
- Interactive effects
  - Years of education
  - Conscientiousness

CME

## Education modifies the relation of AD pathology to level of cognitive function in older persons



Bennett DA, et al. *Neurology* 2003;60:1909-1915.

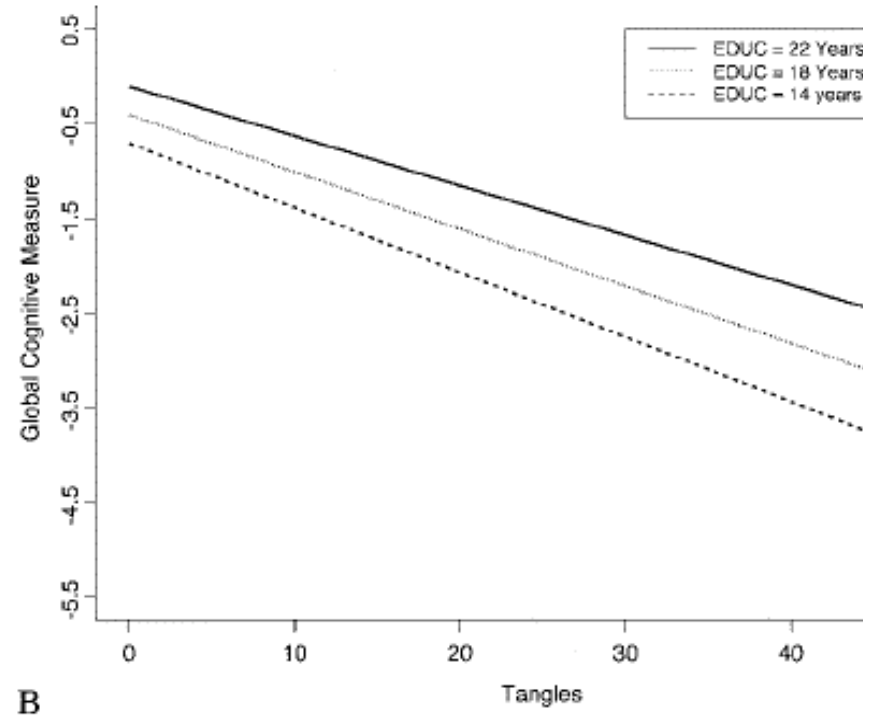
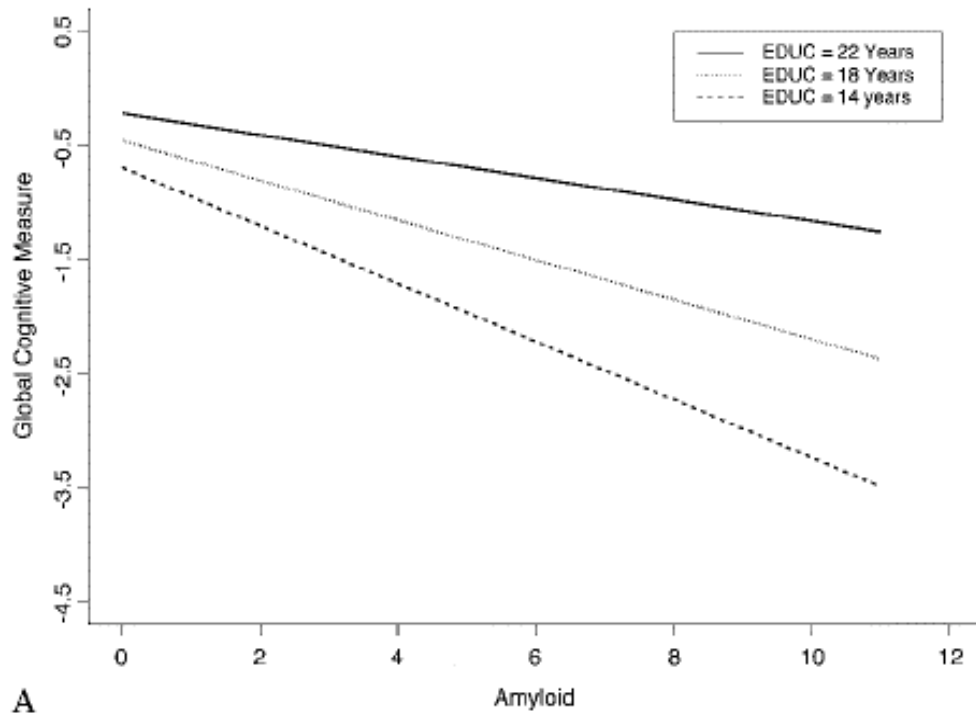
An example of the cognitive scores of two older women (scale: mean = 100, SD = 10, from baseline).

Education	plaques	score	plaques	score
18 years	0	98.1	18	96.2
15 years	0	96.8	18	82.0

Neuritic plaques have less effect on cognition as educational level increases

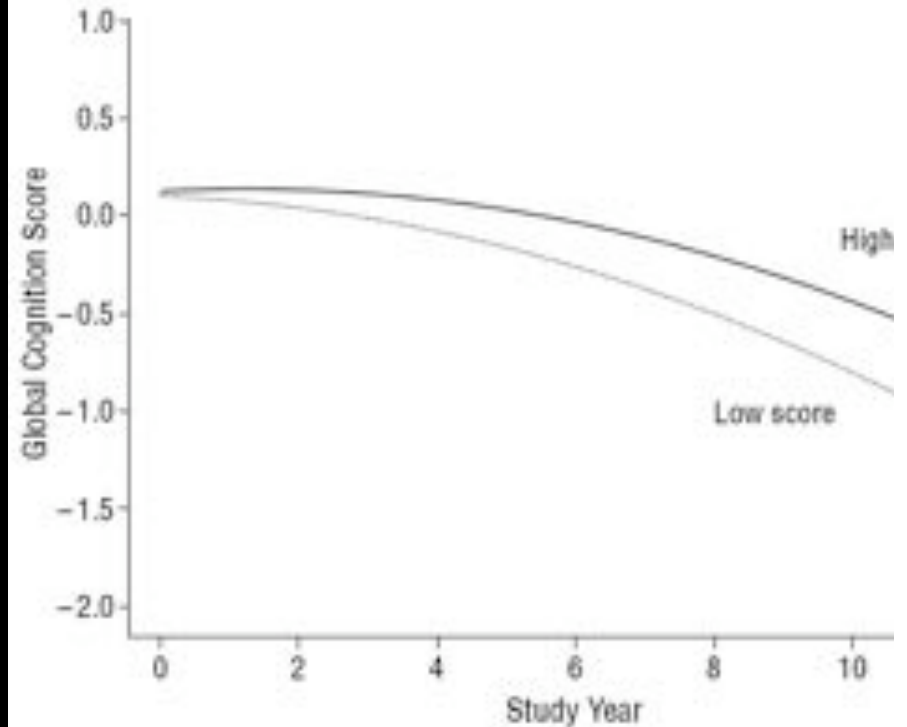
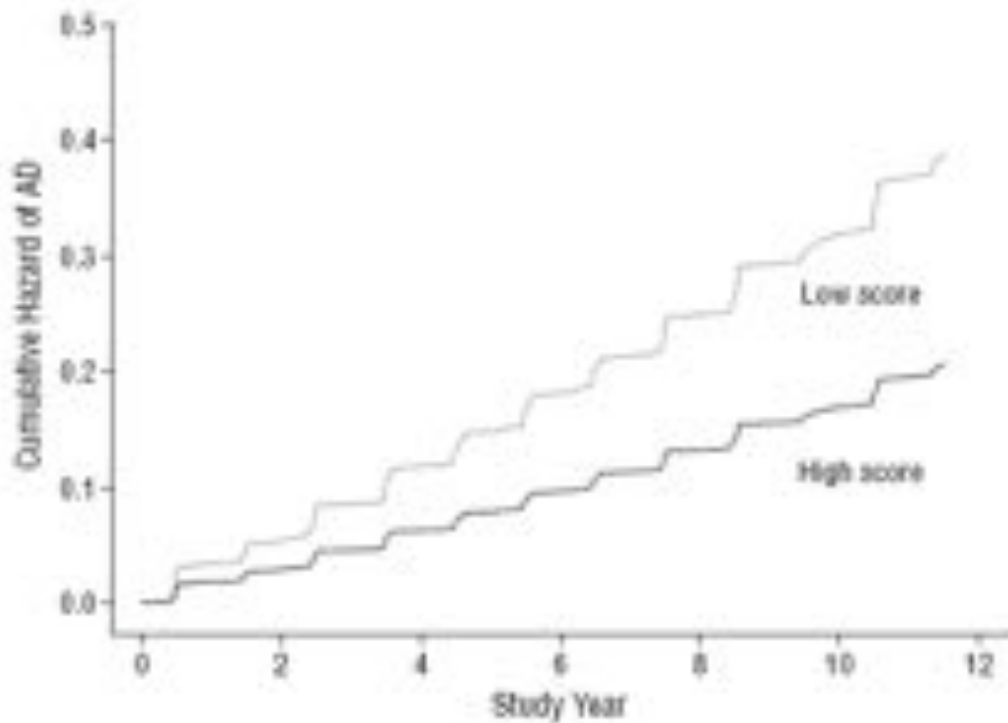


# Education modifies the association of amyloid but not tangles with cognitive function

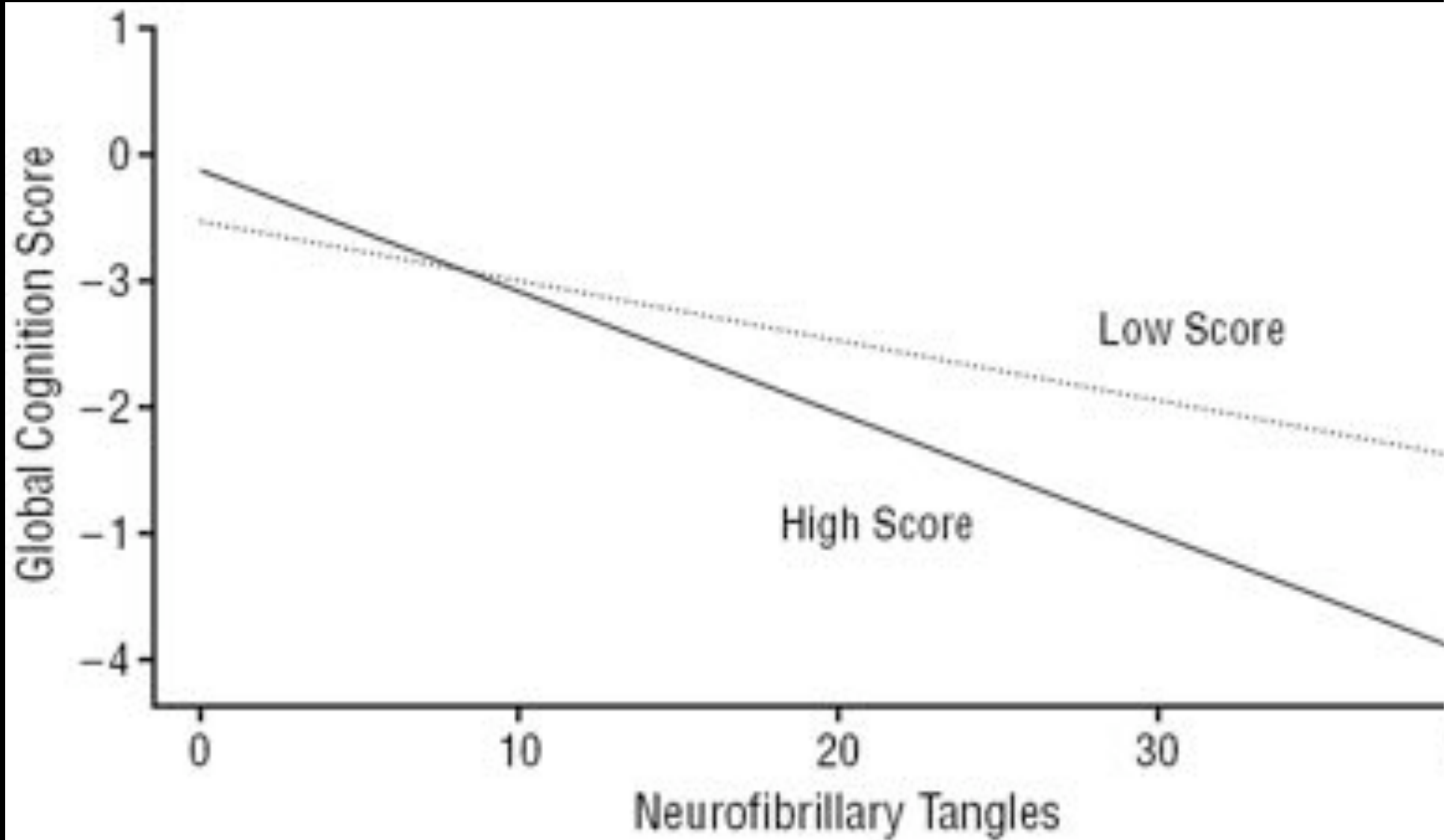


# Conscientiousness and the Incidence of Alzheimer Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment

Conscientiousness (NEO) refers to a tendency to be self-disciplined, scrupulous and purposeful (e.g., “I am a productive person who always gets the job done”).

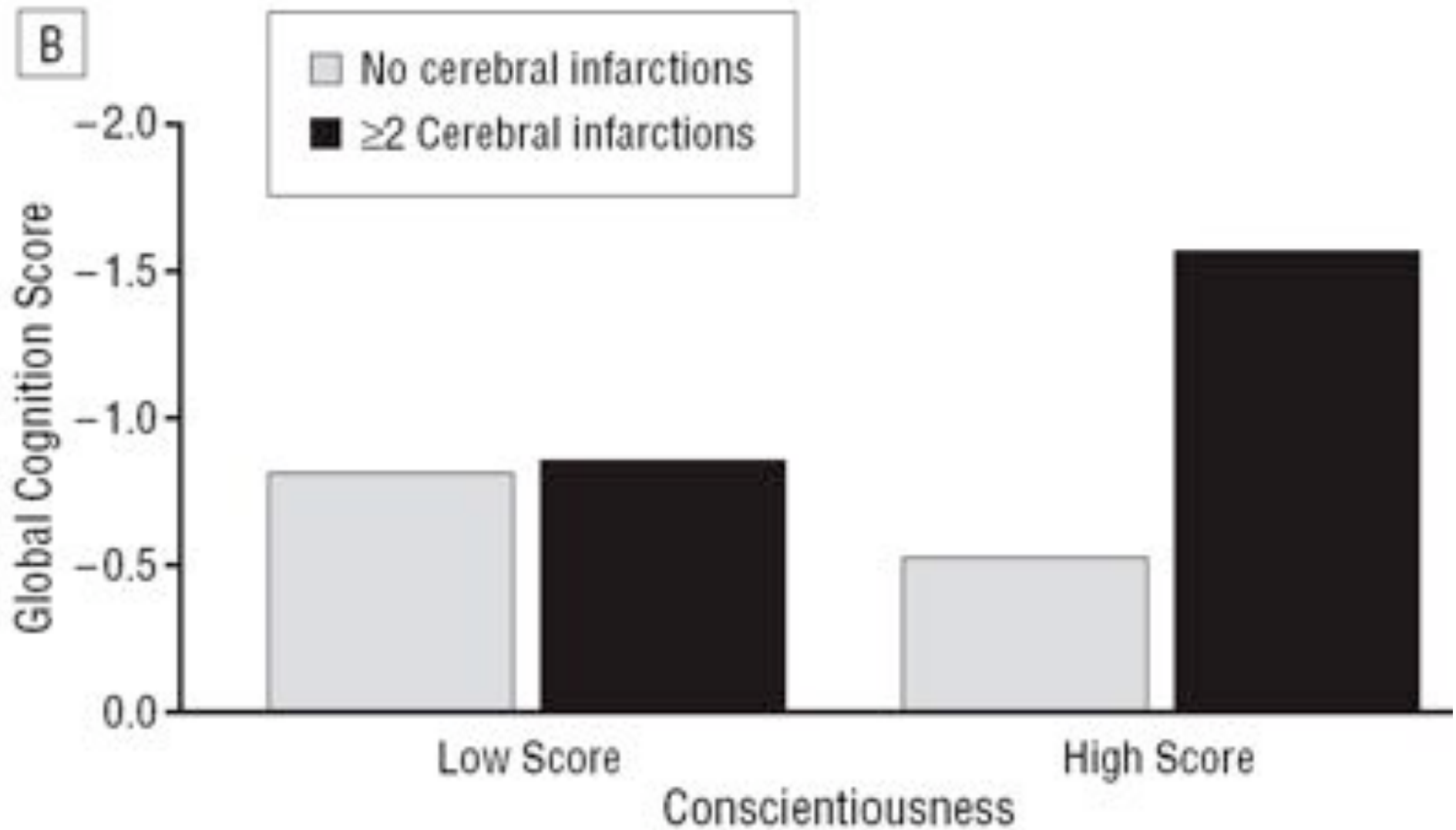


# Conscientiousness and the Incidence of Alzheimer Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment

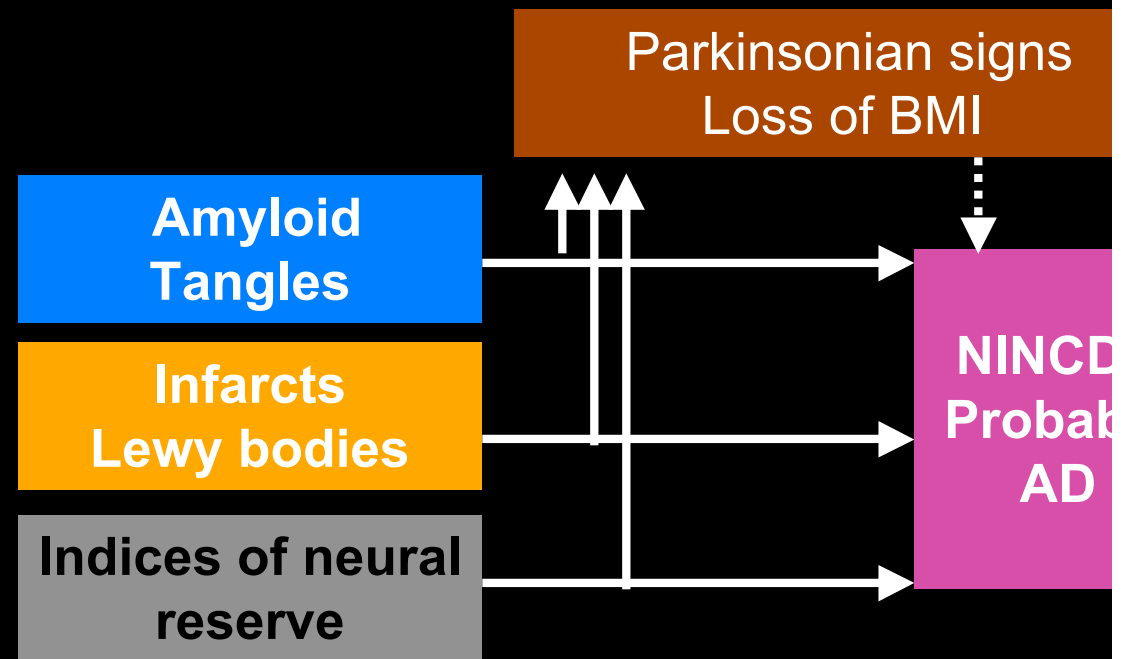


Wilson RS, et al. *Arch Gen Psych* 2007;64:1204-12.

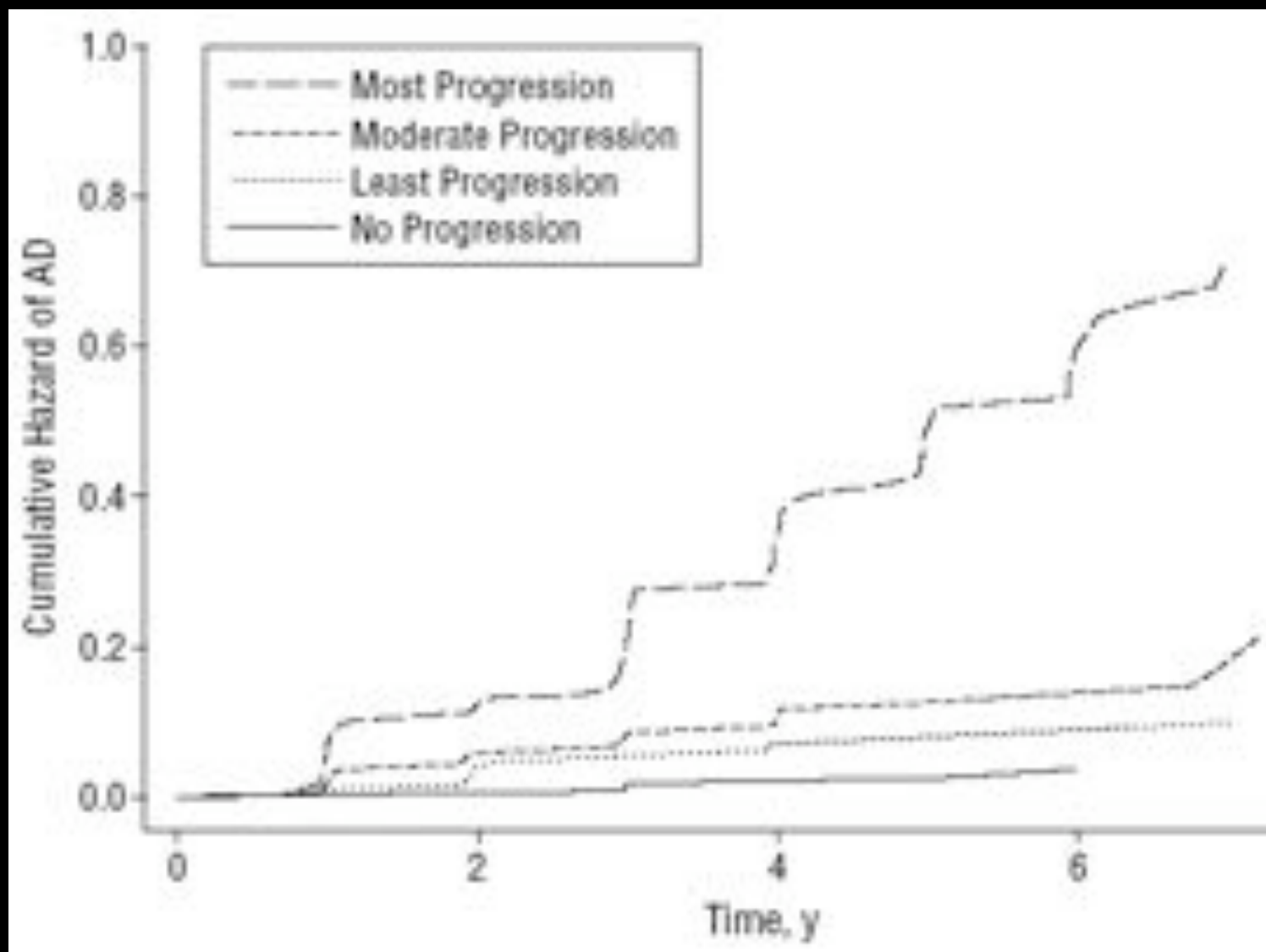
# Conscientiousness and the Incidence of Alzheimer Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment



- *There are no risk factors for AD*
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  - Some factors associated with amyloid and tangles
  - Others with CVD or LBD
  - Others with indices of neural reserve
  - Others are early signs of neuropathology



# Parkinsonianlike Signs and Risk of Incident Alzheimer Disease in Older Persons



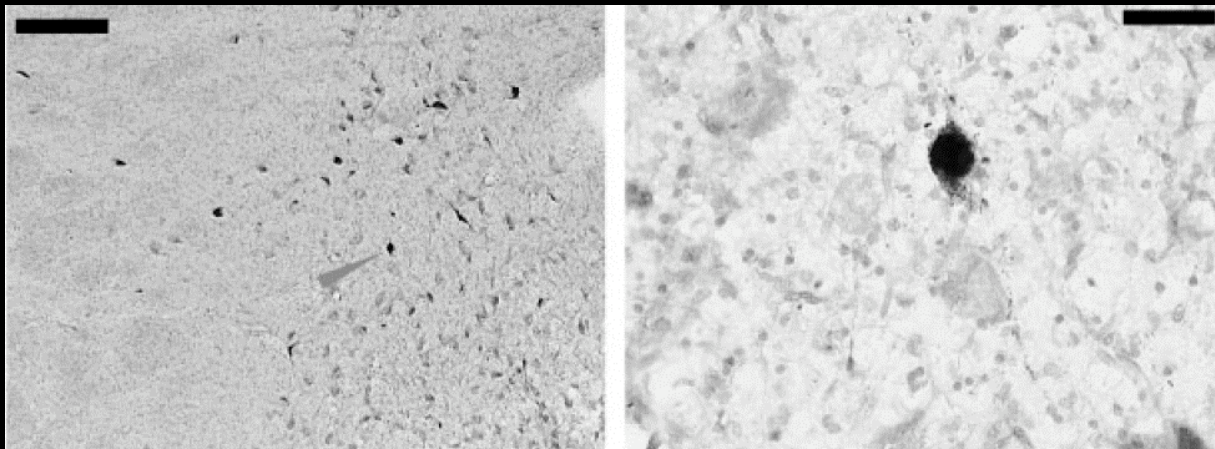
Wilson RS, et al. *Arch Neurol* 2003;60:539-44.



# Substantia Nigra Tangles Are Related to Gait Impairment in Older Persons

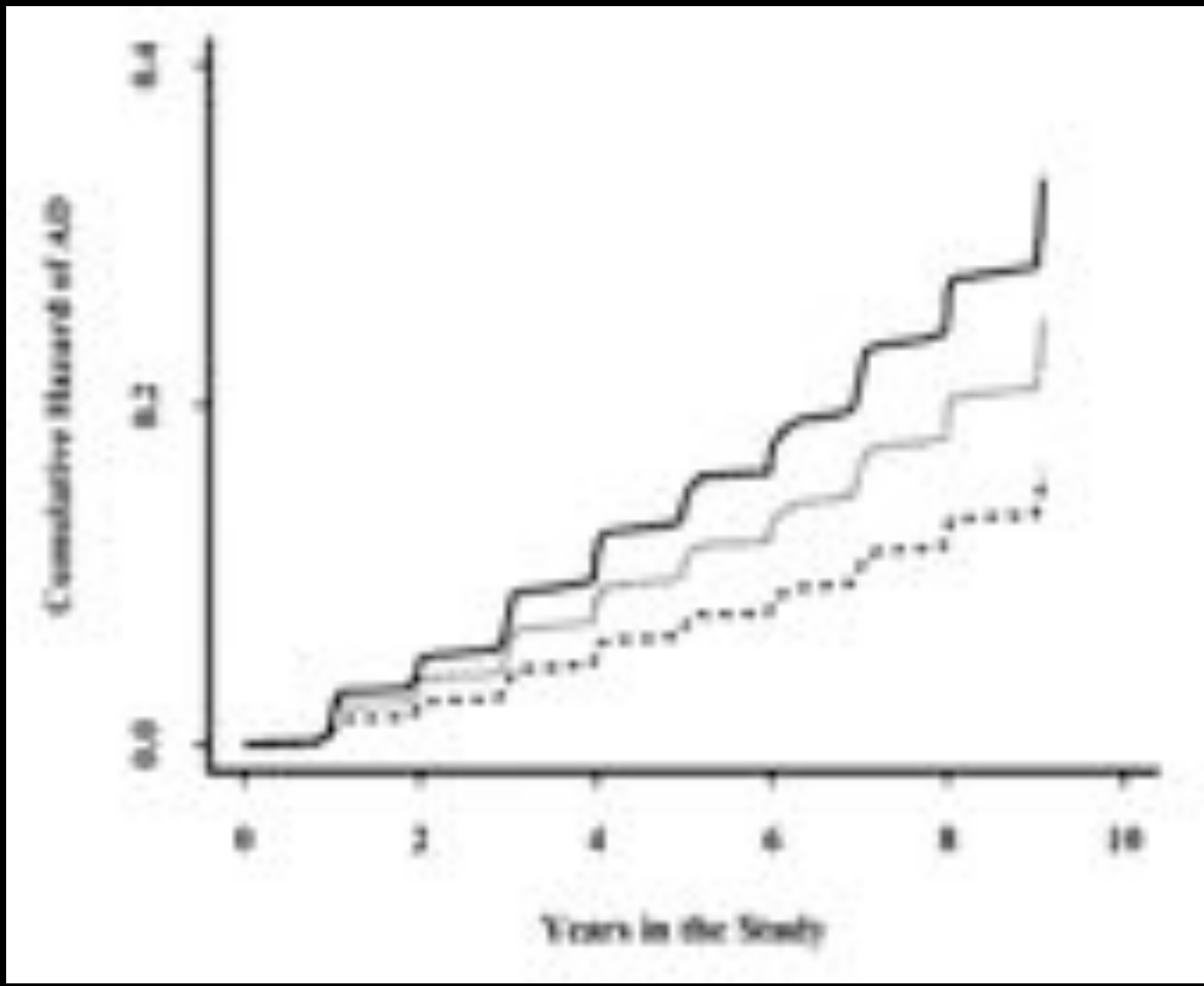
Variable	Gait Impairment
Age (yr)	0.39 <sup>a</sup>
Male sex	-0.13
Dementia	0.45 <sup>a</sup>
Braak score	0.22 <sup>c</sup>
Cortical NFT density	0.32 <sup>b</sup>
Amyloid %	0.15
Lewy bodies	0.17
Cerebral infarcts	0.18
Nigral neuronal loss	0.24 <sup>c</sup>
Substantia nigra tangle count	0.30 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> $p < 0.001$ ; <sup>b</sup> $p < 0.01$ ; <sup>c</sup> $p < 0.05$ .



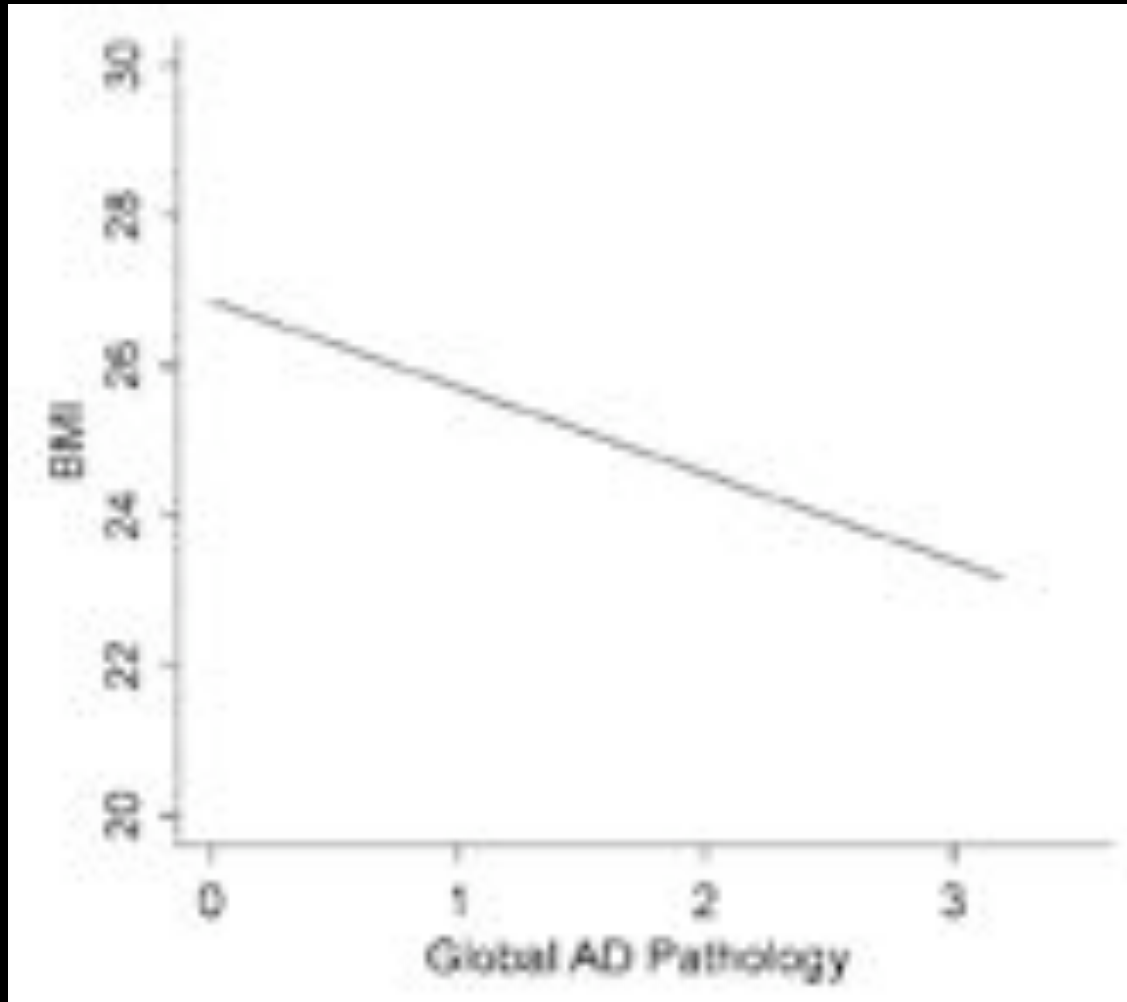
Schneider JA, et al. *Ann Neurol* 2006;59:166–73.

# Change in body mass index and risk of incident Alzheimer disease

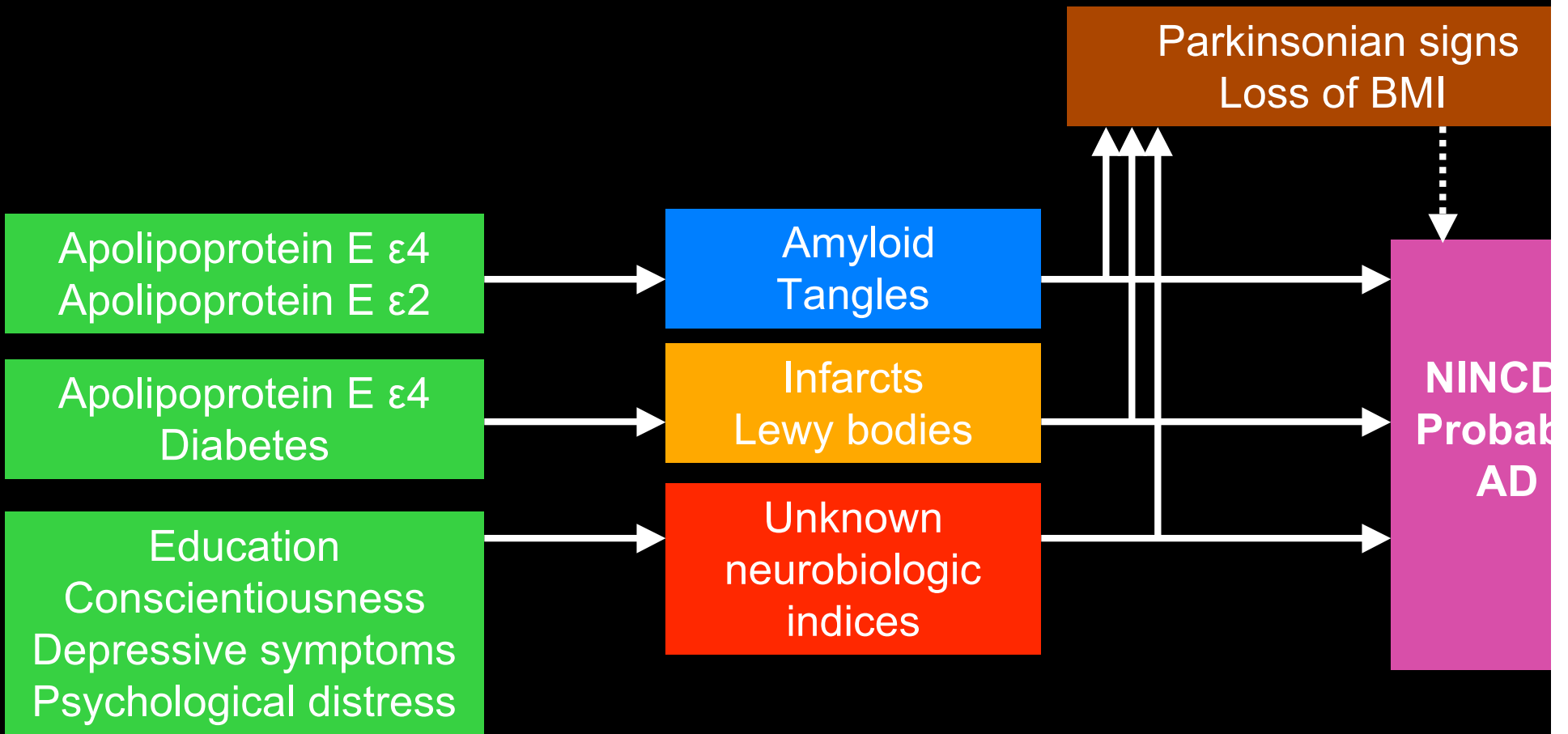


Buchman AS, et al. *Neurol* 2004;63:996–1001.

# Body mass index in older persons is associated with Alzheimer disease pathology



Buchman AS, et al. *Neurol* 2006;67:1949–54.



JOHN BREMAN  
DRAWING  
ENCLOSURE  
1987



WHAT A LONG  
STRANGE TRIP  
IT'S BEEN.



