



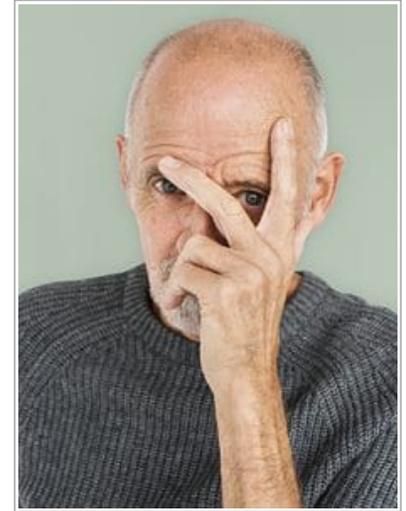
Study Finds No Evidence of Personality Change Before Dementia Onset

By [Traci Pedersen](#)

A new comprehensive study from Florida State University (FSU) finds no evidence to support the idea that personality changes begin before the clinical onset of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia.

MCI is an intermediate stage falling between the expected cognitive decline of natural aging and the more severe decline of dementia. It often involves problems with memory, language, thinking and judgment.

While there is a well-known link between personality changes and Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, there still exists an ongoing debate among researchers as to whether or not these personality and behavioral changes appear in patients before the onset of the disease.



“We further found that personality remained stable even within the last few years before the onset of mild cognitive impairment,” said Associate Professor Dr. Antonio Terracciano from the College of Medicine at FSU.

Terracciano conducted the study with Associate Professor Dr. Angelina Sutin at the College of Medicine and researchers from the National Institute on Aging. Using data from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, the researchers looked at personality and clinical assessments taken between 1980 and July 2016 from more than 2,000 individuals who initially showed no cognitive impairment.

About 18 percent of these study participants later developed MCI or dementia.

“We compared whether personality change in people who later developed dementia differed from those who remained cognitively normal,” Terracciano said. “Unlike previous research, this study examined multiple waves of self-rated personality data collected up to 36 years before participants developed any sign of dementia.”

The findings show that the trajectory of personality traits did not differ between those who would later develop dementia and those who did not.

But while personality change was not an early sign of dementia, the study shows further support that innate personality traits (including high levels of neuroticism and low levels of conscientiousness) are risk factors for dementia.

For physicians and family members of dementia patients, personality changes remain an important consideration in the care of those who have already experienced the clinical onset of MCI or dementia. Increasing apathy, irritability, mood changes, and other behavioral symptoms impact quality of life for both patients and their caregivers.

Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia in older people, accounting for between 60 and 80 percent of all cases. The disease is characterized by symptoms such as memory loss, language deterioration, poor judgment, confusion, restlessness, and mood swings.

The study is published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Source: [Florida State University](#)