

Diagnosing and treating apathy in dementia



Masud Husain

Nuffield Dept Clinical Neurosciences & Dept Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

Disclosures

- Research grants from Wellcome Trust, NIHR, MRC and EU
- Founding member of NeuHealth
- Honoraria from Eli Lilly, Otsuka and Sumitomo Pharma

Learning objectives

- Understand the clinical criteria for diagnosing apathy
- Be familiar with different scales used to measure apathy
- Appreciate that there are several domains of apathy
- Consider how to distinguish apathy from depression
- Become familiar with key clinical trials for apathy

Key messages

- Apathy is a common syndrome which can have a significant impact on prognosis and quality of life across many brain diseases
- It can be difficult to distinguish from depression but a careful history taken from the patient and a caregiver can help to make the distinction
- New therapies are emerging for treatment of apathy

Further reading available at



www.masudhusain.org

Recommended reviews

Neuroscience of apathy and anhedonia: a transdiagnostic approach

Husain & Roiser (2018) *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 19:470-484

Apathy and Motivation: Biological Basis and Drug Treatment

Costello, Husain & Roiser (2023) *Ann Rev Pharm Tox* (available online ahead of print)

Some key clinical references

Thobois S, Lhommée E, Klinger H, et al. Parkinsonian apathy responds to dopaminergic stimulation of D2/D3 receptors with piribedil. *Brain*. 2013;136(5):1568-1577.

Devos D, Moreau C, Maltête D, et al. Rivastigmine in apathetic but dementia and depression-free patients with Parkinson's disease: a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomised clinical trial. *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry*. 2014;85(6):668-674.

Robert P, Lanctôt KL, Agüera-Ortiz L, et al. Is it time to revise the diagnostic criteria for apathy in brain disorders? The 2018 international consensus group. *Eur Psychiatry*. 2018;54:71-76. doi:10.1016/j.

Mintzer J, Lanctôt KL, Scherer RW, et al. Effect of Methylphenidate on Apathy in Patients With Alzheimer Disease. *JAMA Neurol*. 2021;78(11):1324-1332.

David M, Del Giovane M, Liu K, et al. Cognitive and Neuropsychiatric Effects of Noradrenergic Treatment in Alzheimer's Disease: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry*. 2022;93:1080-1090.