


Changes in brain and cognition during the preclinical phase of Alzheimer's Disease: Findings from the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (WRAP)

Sterling Johnson, PhD
Jean R. Finley Professor of Geriatrics and Dementia
 University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
 scj@medicine.wisc.edu



1

Disclosures

Over the past two years:

- Consultant to Roche Diagnostics
- Consultant to Prothena
- Consultant to Merck
- Consultant to Eisai

2

Alzheimer's Disease in 2022

- AD is defined by its dual proteinopathy: amyloid- β and tau
 - Clinical stage defined on a separate scale
- AD has a prolonged presymptomatic stage that may or may not progress to symptoms
 - This stage is being intensely studied by the field
- We have PET and CSF biomarkers appropriate for AD
 - Blood markers are coming
- Other diseases may mimic or co-occur with AD symptom expression
 - We have some MRI markers of cerebrovascular disease;
 - but no biomarkers for other neurodegenerative diseases
- AD affects ~5.8m in the U.S.
 - rough estimate-not informed by biomarkers

3

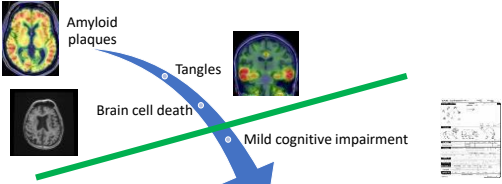
NIA-AA Research Framework

Biomarker Profiles		Syndromal Staging of Cognitive Continuum
AT(N) profiles	Normal AD biomarkers	Cognitively unimpaired
A-T-(N)-	Alzheimer's pathologic change	Mild cognitive impairment
A+T-(N>)	Alzheimer's disease	Dementia
A+T+(N+)	Alzheimer's disease	"The AT(N) framework"
A+T-(N)+	Alzheimer's and concomitant suspected non Alzheimer's pathologic change	
A-T+(N)-	Non-AD pathologic change	
A-T-(N)+	Non-AD pathologic change	
A-T+(N)+	Non-AD pathologic change	


Jack, et al. *Alzheimers Dement.* 2018

4

Alzheimer's disease progression heuristic

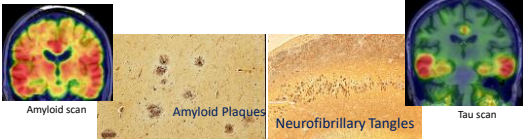


~10-25 years from detectable levels of amyloid to dementia
 The preclinical window



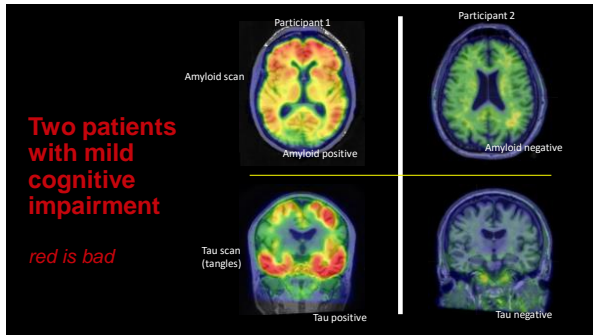
5

Imaging helps us identify Alzheimer's disease



No longer do we need to wait until death to learn if its Alzheimer's Disease!

6



7

AD Biomarkers

Amyloid

- [F18]florbetapir PET (FDA approved)
- [F18]florbetaben PET (FDA approved)
- [F18]flutemetamol PET (FDA approved)
- [F18]NAV4694 PET
- [C11]Pittsburgh compound B PIB PET
- CSF $A\beta_{42}$; $A\beta_{42}/A\beta_{40}$; $A\beta_{42}/A\beta_{40}$ ratios

Tau

- [F18]flortaucipir (FDA approved)
- [F18]PI2620
- [F18]MK-6240
- [F18]RO948
- PI $A\beta_{181}$; P $A\tau_{217}$; P $A\tau_{231}$

Candidate (N)

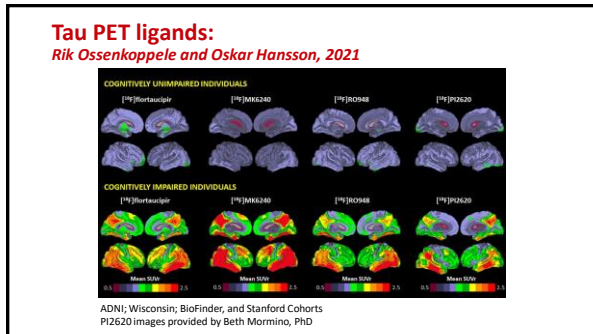
- MRI (structure, diffusion, metabolism)
- FDG PET (metabolism)
- UCB-JSV2A PET
- CSF or plasma NFL (axons)
- CSF Neurogranin (post-synaptic)
- Plasma GFAP

**CSF total tau is too correlated with p-tau₁₈₁ to work for N (r=.99)

Amyloid scan [C-11]PIB

Tau scan [F-18]MK-6240

8



9

20 YEARS
WRAP
2001 - 2021
Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention

- When is cognitive decline more than normal aging?
- What health, lifestyle and genetic factors increase or decrease risk for cognitive decline and AD proteinopathy?
- Longitudinal study starting at midlife
- Imaging and fluid biomarkers

10

UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health

UW-Madison Alzheimer's Disease Program

Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (WADRC)	Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute (WAI) (Madison and Regional Milwaukee Offices)
One of 33 national NIH-funded Alzheimer's Disease Centers	Closely tied to state public health and training initiatives
Emphasis on basic and clinical research, research engagement, and research training	Emphasis on research, clinical education, public health, and outreach
Employs over 80 faculty and staff in Madison	Employs over 30 faculty and staff in Madison, Milwaukee, and LaCrosse
Funded by: National Institutes of Health (NIH) UW-Madison SMPH State funds Philanthropy	Funded by: Federal, foundation, and education grants UW-Madison SMPH State funds Philanthropy

11

UW School of Medicine and Public Health-Alzheimer's focused cohorts

UW-Madison Alzheimer's Disease Program

Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (WADRC)	Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute (WAI)
WADRC clinical core (1000 participants; 650 active):	WRAP (1725 participants; 1250 active):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alzheimer's dementia Mild cognitive impairment Cognitively unimpaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitively unimpaired at baseline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data linked to other NIH Centers Detailed questionnaires Cognitive testing Clinical assessment Blood and spinal fluid tests Brain imaging Resources for UW and outside investigators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with other international studies Detailed questionnaires Cognitive testing Clinical assessment Blood and spinal fluid tests Brain imaging Resources for UW and outside investigators

12

WRAP is

A longitudinal observational AD risk cohort from midlife

- (n=1725; ~1250 active; mean bsln age 54; mean followup 11 years)
- parental family history (73%)
- APOE4 (41%)

A registry

- for ~18+ linked studies

13

The Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention: Research Goals



Wrap.wisc.edu

14

WRAP: One of the world's largest and longest running studies of individuals at risk for Alzheimer's dementia
Risk from parental family history of dementia presumed due to AD

Average WRAP Participant

- 67 years old
- 70% female
- 73% white
- 40% high school
- 11 years in college
- 40% no AD
- 10% mild AD
- 41% APOE4
- 50% no AD

Current focus on biomarker research
25% have amyloid in their brains

See Johnson et al 2018 A&D DADM
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dadm.2017.11.007>

For More Information, Contact WRAP: Madison: (800) 417-4169; Milwaukee: (414) 219-7911; LaCrosse: (608) 392-7187

15

Discoveries in prevention science from WRAP

01

Determine the age that Alzheimer's starts from brain scans

02

Identify subtle cognitive decline and its onset

03

Better health and lifestyle slow cognitive decline but not amyloid

Our frontier

- How can we expand the interval between amyloid onset age and the cognitive decline onset age?
- Do health and lifestyle behaviors help?
- Make discoveries in the context of diversity
- AD rarely occurs by itself

16

Applications of amyloid and tau PET to preclinical AD

17

How does A+ and T+ status relate to cognitive decline?

Beththausen et al., 2020, *Brain*



18

Bethhouser et al, Brain 2020

- A subset of n=167 healthy and cognitively normal adults from WRAP who also had PET imaging
- Do A/T groups differ in their cognitive trajectories?



19

Results: Demographics at PET

	A-T (n=124)	A-T+ (n=9)	A-T- (n=23)	A-T+ (n=15)	Group P-Val	Total (N=167)
Demographics						
Age at Most Recent Cognitive Assessment (yrs)	65.7 ± 6.4	72.0 ± 6.0	69.3 ± 4.9*	69.9 ± 4.5	0.001 §	66.7 ± 6.3
% Female	67.7	100	60.9	80.0	0.272	68.9
% Non-Caucasian	8.1	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.572	6.8
% Family History of Dementia	70.2	100.0	69.6	93.3	0.132	73.1
WRAT-III Reading Score	109	104	111	109	0.73†	110
	[103, 115]	[99, 115]	[106, 115]	[105, 113]		[103, 114]
% Carriers	33.3*	20.0*	55.2	86.7	<0.001‡	42.5
APOE-ε4						
% Non-Carriers	66.7**	80.0*	36.4	13.3		58.2
% Heterozygous	31.7**	20.0*	54.5	66.7	<0.001‡	37.6
% Homozygous	1.6**	0.0*	9.1	20.0		4.2

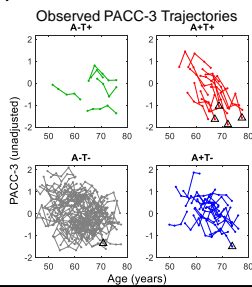
- Age Difference (A-T- and A+T+)
- No difference in WRAT-III, sex, race, or family history
- Significant difference in APOE-ε4 status

Bethhouser et al 2020, Brain

20

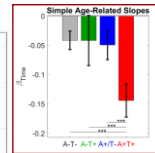
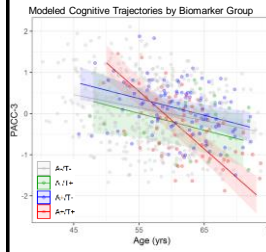
Results: Retrospective PACC-3 and A/T Groups

Bethhouser et al 2020, Brain



21

Results: Retrospective Cognitive Decline by Biomarker Group



- Significant Group×Time Effect
- +/- ~3x faster decline than -/-

Insights: among A+T+ cognition is declining many years prior to MCI (midlife) APOE not synonymous with A+

Bethhouser, et al. 2020, Brain

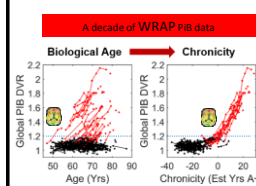
22

Other results and remaining questions

- Neurodegeneration
 - Marginally more MRI hippocampal volume loss in A+T+ group
- Health and vascular features
 - No meaningful differences at WRAP baseline or at time of later PET
 - BMI, WHR, cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose, Vit B12
- Can we derive more information if we go beyond A+ status?
- is there meaningful temporal information in the rate of change?

23

Background: Amyloid PET trajectories are predictable

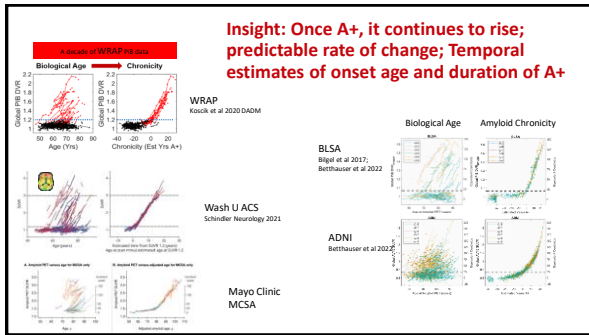


Koscik et al, DADM 2020 observed:

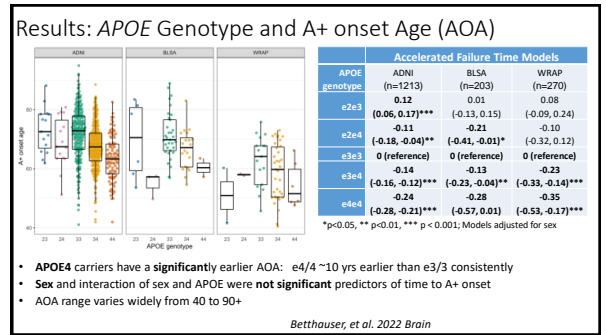
- Amyloid trajectories are predictable!
- Feasible to transpose amyloid to the time domain
- Can estimate A+ onset age from **a single scan**
- Longer A+ Chronicity (duration) was associated with tau PET and cognitive decline

WRAP = Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (Johnson et al 2018, DADM)

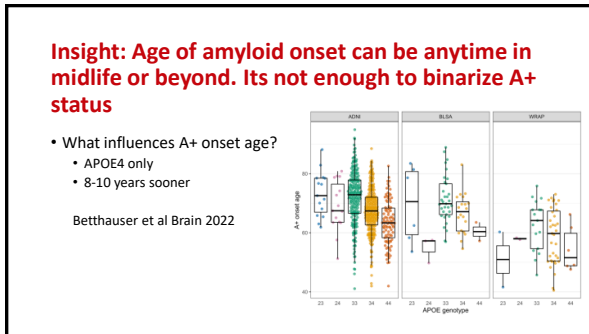
24



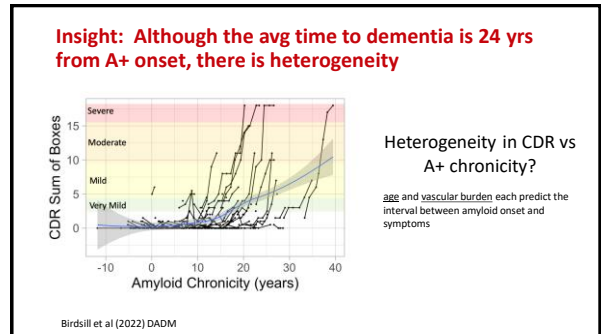
25



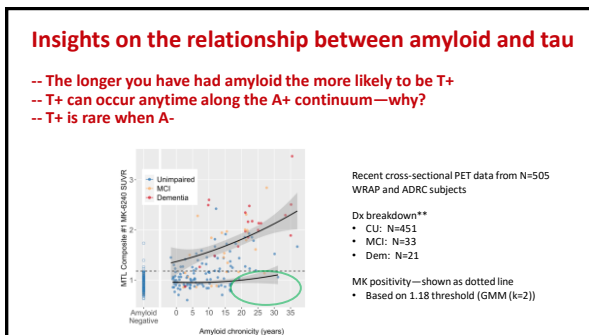
26



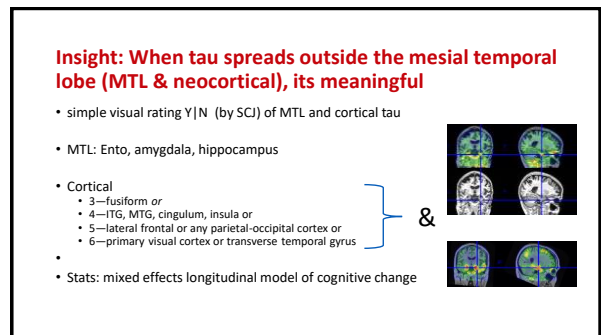
27



28



29



30

Question: Does MTL or MTL& relate to cognitive decline in initially CU?

- N=340 participants from WRAP or ADRC and **CU** at first cognitive visit
- Outcomes:
 - Cross sectional mean cognitive scores at exam most proximal to last PET, and annual rate of change in cognition
- Mixed effects model of cognition over time (retrospective)

31

MTL& LME of retrospective cognitive decline

Sample: N=340
WRAP and WADRC subjects **Unimpaired at baseline** PACC-3 (V2 for most) with complete covariates and last PACC-3 within 3 years of last tau PET

- Primary outcome:**
- Z-scored, cross-walked 3-test Preclinical Alzheimer's Cognitive Composite (PACC-3)
 - Trails B version
 - Years of cognitive follow-up → Median (IQR): 8.0 (6.1-9.8)

- Primary predictors:**
- Amyloid and VR Tau group:
 - A-T-, N=255
 - A+/T-, N=45
 - A+/T+ MTL only, N=10
 - A+/T+ MTL&Neo, N=30
 - Amyloid positivity (Global PIB DVR>1.16)
 - T+ based on Visual Rating of NFT stage (MTL only and MTL&)

32

Model 1: MTL and neocortical tau is associated with faster decline

Model statistics

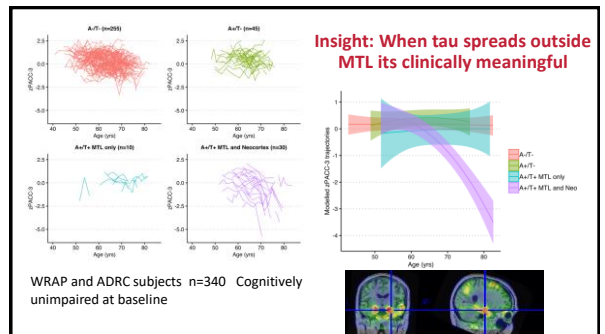
Parameter estimates, 95% confidence intervals (CI) and P-values are shown for the main model covariates and predictors of interest.

Interpretation:

Results of the LME indicated significant linear and quadratic amyloid duration by age interactions. These results suggest that the A+ group with MTL and neocortical tau had faster rates of retrospective cognitive decline during the ~8 years of cognitive follow-up.

Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Intercept	-0.0883	-0.4083 - 0.2317	0.204
gender f (Male)	-0.6887	-0.8916 - -0.3421	<0.001
edu h (1)	0.6887	0.3087 - 0.6697	<0.001
Data Source (WRAP)	-0.0754	-0.2606 - 0.1099	0.425
practice	0.0591	0.0025 - 0.1156	0.041
1 tau pacc3 at baseline	-0.0393	-0.1360 - 0.0575	0.316
AVR group (A+T)	0.2360	-0.0162 - 0.4972	0.070
AVR group (A+T+ MTL only)	-0.2192	-0.7613 - 0.3229	0.428
AVR group (A+T+ MTL and Neo)	-0.3823	-0.8914 - -0.0732	0.015
<65 age	-0.0012	-0.0108 - 0.0083	0.799
<65 age^2	-0.0001	-0.0008 - 0.0006	0.805
AVR group (A+T) + <65 age	0.0002	-0.0229 - 0.0234	0.986
AVR group (A+T+ MTL and Neo) + <65 age	0.0077	-0.0472 - 0.0625	0.784
AVR group (A+T+ MTL and Neo) + <65 age^2	-0.0049	-0.1316 - 0.0762	<0.001
AVR group (A+T) + <65 age^2	-0.0011	-0.0034 - 0.0011	0.334
AVR group (A+T+ MTL and Neo) + <65 age^2	-0.0001	-0.0043 - 0.0040	0.944
AVR group (A+T+ MTL and Neo) + <65 age^2	-0.0046	-0.0070 - 0.0021	<0.001

33



34

What increases or decreases risk for AD and its cognitive syndrome of dementia?

Does

- Hypertension
- Sleep
- Physical Activity
- Stress / Mood
- Neighborhood
- Diet
- Inflammation
- Cognitive Activity
- Social Support
- Genetics

prevent or slow amyloid onset or cognitive symptoms?

35

The Lifestyle for Brain Health (LIBRA) index

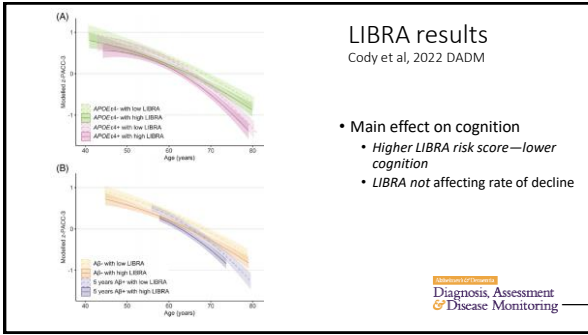
Deekers et al 2020

Table: Factor scores and definitions used to calculate the LIBRA index

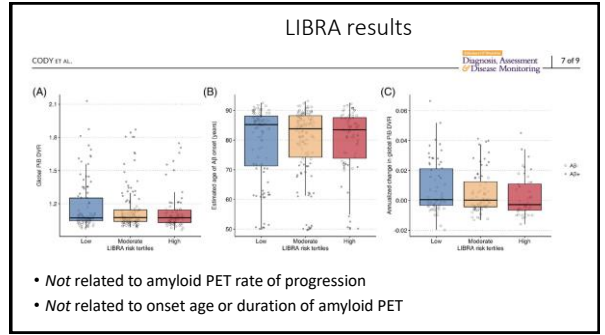
Definition	Score
Modifiable factors	
Low/moderate alcohol use	-1.0
Cardiovascular disease	+1.0
Physical inactivity	+1.1
Renal dysfunction	+1.1
Diabetes	+1.3
High cholesterol	+1.4
Smoking	+1.5
Obesity	+1.6
Hypertension	+1.6
Depression	+2.1
High cognitive activity	-3.2
Non-modifiable factors	
Age	
Sex	

Cody et al 2022 DADM

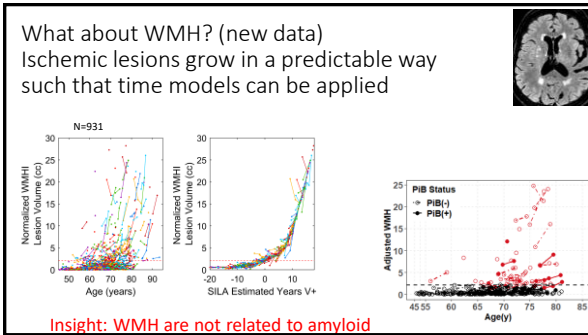
36



37



38



39

Blood Biomarkers in WRAP

40

Can we glean meaningful information from blood??
Design for plasma ptau217 pilot study

- Collaboration with Oskar Hansson: His lab ran Lilly MSD ptau217 on 530 samples from 173 people; Lab was blind to participant status; serial samples ran on same plate; location on plate and amyloid status were randomized
- N=173 WRAP participants: selected on the basis of PIB A+ status and availability of plasma and cognition
- Mostly cognitively normal at first plasma sample (N=166 CU, 3 MCI, 2 Dementia, 1 Other, 1 missing)
- All had at least one PIB PET and most (N=150) had at least one MK6240 PET
- 44% (n=76) A+ based on PIB PET; 56% were PIB A-
- Age at first plasma: M=63 SD 6.2
- Age at last plasma: M= 68 SD 6.1
- Median of 3 plasma samples (range 1-5)
- Questions:
 - Ptau217 change over time by PIB status
 - Concordance with PIB and concordance with MK6240 status
 - Cognitive change over time
- Plots and tables by Erin Jonaitis (except where otherwise noted)

Jonaitis et al medrxiv and in review.

41

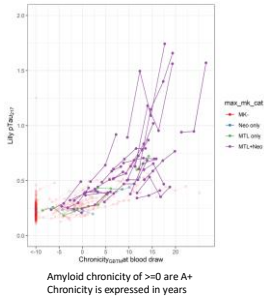
Table 1

Variable	Value
Number of participants	173
Number of observations per participant, median (range)	3 (1, 5)
Age at first plasma, mean (SD)	63.1 (6.21)
Age at last plasma, mean (SD)	68.2 (6.13)
Year of first plasma follow-up, mean (SD)	5.1 (4.17)
Female, n (%)	112 (64.5%)
Male, n (%)	61 (35.5%)
White, n (%)	150 (87%)
Black, n (%)	5 (3%)
Native American, n (%)	2 (1%)
Cognitively impaired - stable at first plasma, n (%)	131 (75%)
Cognitively impaired - declining at first plasma, n (%)	35 (20%)
MCI at first plasma, n (%)	3 (2%)
Dementia at first plasma, n (%)	2 (1%)
Non-MCI cognitively impaired at first plasma, n (%)	1 (1%)
Cognitively impaired - stable at last plasma, n (%)	134 (77%)
Cognitively impaired - declining at last plasma, n (%)	24 (14%)
MCI at last plasma, n (%)	0 (0%)
Dementia at last plasma, n (%)	2 (1%)
Abeta42/40 - stable at first plasma, n (%)	65 (38%)
Abeta42/40 - declining at first plasma, n (%)	64 (37%)
PIB - stable at first plasma, n (%)	99 (57%)
PIB - declining at first plasma, n (%)	74 (43%)
MK - stable at first plasma, n (%)	113 (65%)
MK - declining at first plasma, n (%)	60 (35%)
MK - PET+ - No PET at first plasma, n (%)	27 (16%)
	0

Jonaitis et al medrxiv and in review.

42

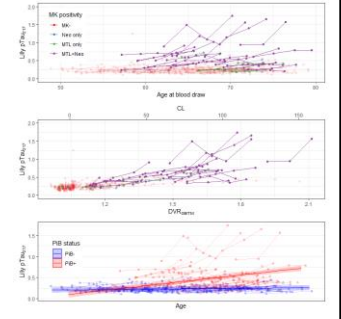
pTau_{217} is higher in people who have had amyloid longer and higher still in people who are T+ extending out of the MTL



Jonaitis et al medrxiv and in review.

43

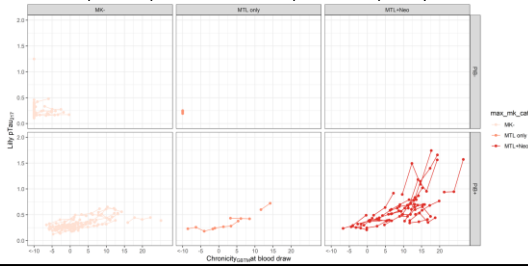
- Plotted against raw age, pTau_{217} shows relationship with MK (top) and PIB (bottom); fitted line = mixed effects regression
- Plotted against model-estimated PiB DVR, clustering with MK becomes clearer (middle)



Jonaitis et al medrxiv and in review.

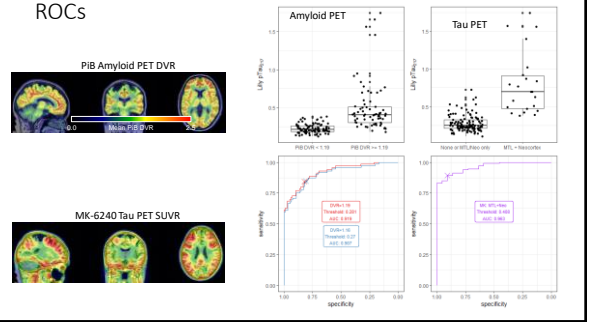
44

Change over time in pTau_{217} is pronounced in WRAP participants with AD proteinopathy



45

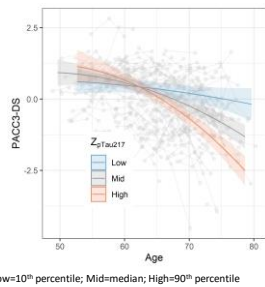
ROCs



46

Cognitive decline on a cognitive composite is faster in people with higher levels of plasma MSD pTau_{217} at first visit

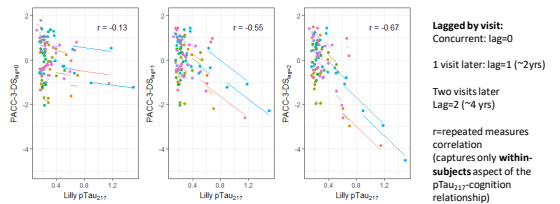
cognitively unimpaired at time of first blood draw



Jonaitis et al medrxiv and in review.

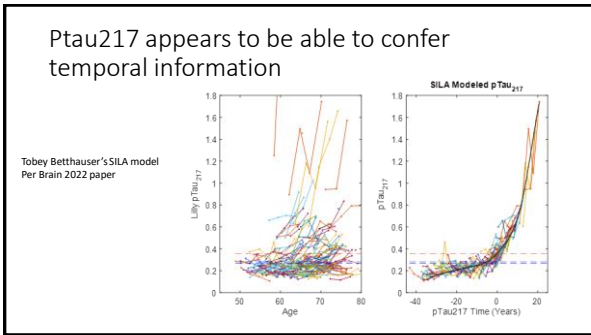
47

Lagged relationship with cognition

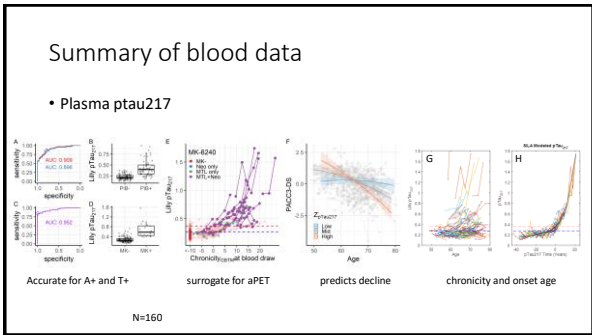


r=repeated measures correlation (captures only within-subjects aspect of the pTau_{217} -cognition relationship)

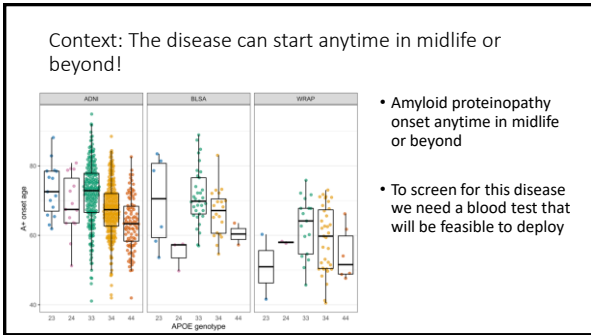
48



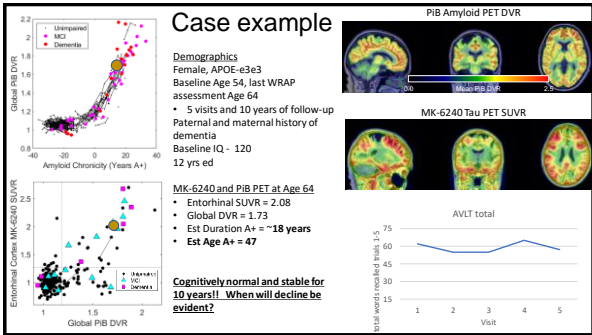
49



50



51



52

Summary

- AD is detectable years prior to symptoms with biomarkers;
- A+T+ groups have been declining from midlife
- The AT(N) framework (at least the A and T parts) works
 - But binarizing overlooks important temporal information
- AD amyloid onset age varies widely, but is estimable
 - Influenced by APOE4
- Temporal info can be derived from a single scan
- Amyloid in the brain accrues slowly and predictably; it is not benign
- The longer you have had it (chronicity), the more likely you are to exhibit cognitive decline—this appears to be through tau.
- Lifestyle and health factors influence cognition, but not amyloid proteinopathy (what about tau?)
- WMH not related to amyloid
- Blood markers are feasible and coming!

53

Thank you

Acknowledgements

- R01 AG027161 (WRAP study)
- R01 AG021155 (PREDICT)
- P30 AG06715 (Wisconsin ADRC)
- Johnson lab staff
- WRAP Staff
- ADRC Staff
- Dedicated participants!

Special thanks to:

- Karly Cody
- Tobey Betthausen, PhD
- Brad Christian, PhD
- Rebecca Kosciak, PhD
- Erin Jonaitis, PhD
- Lianlian Du, MA
- Howard Rowley, MD
- Laura Eisenmenger, MD

54