



NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDERS

MAJOR AND MILD NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDER DUE TO HIV INFECTION (HIV ASSOCIATED DEMENTIA)

What it is:

HIV is a disease caused by infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The illness alters the immune system, making individuals much more vulnerable to infections and diseases. The HIV infection can eventually lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Individuals with HIV may develop major or mild neurocognitive disorder (NCD), also referred to as HIV associated dementia. In order for a diagnosis of major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to HIV infection to be made, the following criteria need to be met:

1. The criteria must be met for either major or mild neurocognitive disorder
2. The individual is documented as being infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
3. The neurocognitive disorder is not better explained by non-HIV conditions, or secondary brain diseases
4. The neurocognitive disorder is not better explained by another medical condition, or mental disorder

Common symptoms:

1. Impaired cognitive function, for example impaired reasoning, problem solving, and planning
2. Short term memory loss
3. Problems dealing with tasks that demand more focused attention
4. Difficulty learning new information
5. Taking longer than usual to solve problems or complete tasks
6. Reductions in fluency of speech
7. Emotional changes such as increased aggression or apathy
8. Movement problems such as clumsiness or poor balance
9. Ataxia, which is a lack of muscle coordination that can affect speech, eye movements, the ability to swallow, walking, picking up objects and other voluntary movements



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Causes:

Major and mild neurocognitive disorder due to HIV infection is caused by the HIV infection affecting the subcortical regions of the brain. Risk factors for HIV infection include unprotected sex and injection drug use. It is estimated that 25% of individuals with HIV will have symptoms that meet the criteria for mild NCD.

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*