

Performance of dialysis patients on the standard and basic Arabic versions of the Montreal Cognitive Assessments

Taim A. Muayqil, MBBS, MSc, Ahmad R. Tarakji, MD, MSPH, Abdullah M. Khattab, MBBS, Nasser T. Balbaid, MBBS, Ahmad M. Al-Dawalibi, MBBS, Sami A. Alqarni, MBBS, Reema A. Hazazi, MBBS, Mohammed H. Alanazy, MD, MSc.

ABSTRACT

الأهداف: قياس مستوى الإدراك لدى مرضى الغسيل الكلوي السعوديين باستخدام النسخة العربية للتقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال.

المنهجية: عملنا دراسة مقطعية في وحدة الغسيل الكلوي في المدينة الطبية بجامعة الملك سعود بمدينة الرياض في الفترة من أبريل 2019 إلى مارس 2020. تم تقييم مستوى الإدراك للمرضى البالغين من العمر أكثر من 18 سنة وليس لديهم تاريخ مرضي بالخرف باستخدام التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال المعياري والأساسي وتم إعادة التقييم على مجموعة فرعية من المرضى.

النتائج: تم استقطاب 83 مشترك، 56 مريض على الغسيل الدموي و 27 مريض على الغسيل البريتوني. متوسط العمر 49.99 سنة، متوسط سنوات التعليم 10.29 (5.5). متوسط نتيجة التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال المعياري 21.03 (5.35)، ومتوسط نتيجة التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال الأساسي 23.45 (5.14). صغر السن، سنوات التعليم الطويلة والغسيل البريتوني كانت لها ارتباط بشكل كبير بالنتائج المرتفعة في التقييمين. معامل الارتباط 0.81 (95% مجال الثقة 0.65، 0.91) و 0.77 (95% مجال الثقة 0.58، 0.91) للتقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال المعياري والأساسي على التوالي. تقييم الوظائف التنفيذية والحسابية كانت أعلى في مجموعة الغسيل البريتوني في التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال الأساسي. متوسط نتيجة التذكر كانت أعلى في مجموعة الغسيل البريتوني في التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال المعياري.

الخلاصة: مرضى الغسيل الدموي أكثر عرضة لتأثر الوظائف الإدراكية مقارنة بمرضى الغسيل البريتوني. العمر وعدد سنوات التعليم متغيرات مهمة لها تأثير على الوظائف الإدراكية. نسختي التقييم المعرفي المتبع في مونتريال أداة قياس موثوقة.

Objectives: To assess cognitive performance in Saudi patients on dialysis using Arabic versions of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) and assess the reliability of the scales.

Methods: We performed a cross-sectional study at the dialysis unit of King Saud University Medical City, Riyadh from April 2019 to March 2020. Patients ≥ 18 years of age with no history of dementia underwent cognitive assessment with the standard (MoCA-A) and basic (MoCA-B) Arabic versions, with repeat testing in a subset of participants.

Results: Recruitment included 83 participants, 56 on hemodialysis (HD) and 27 on peritoneal dialysis (PD). The mean \pm SD for age was 49.99 (15.48), and for years of education was 10.29 (5.5). The mean score for MoCA-A was 21.03 \pm 5.35, and for MoCA-B was 23.45 \pm 5.14. Younger age, longer years of education and peritoneal dialysis were significantly associated with higher MoCA scores on both versions ($p < 0.05$). The ICC was 0.81 (95% CI 0.65, 0.91) and 0.77 (95% CI 0.58, 0.89) for MoCA-A and MoCA-B, respectively. The performance on the executive and calculation tasks were higher in the PD group on the MoCA-B. The recall mean score was higher in the PD group on the MoCA-A.

Conclusion: The HD patients are at higher risk for cognitive impairment compared to PD patients. Age and education are important variables influencing performance. Both Arabic versions of the MoCA are reliable screening tools.

*Neurosciences 2023; Vol. 28 (2): 100-107
doi: 10.17712/nsj.2023.2.20220110*

From the Neurology Unit (Alanazy, Muayqil), Department of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine, King Saud University, from the College of Medicine (Khattab, Balbaid, Al-Dawalibi, Alqarni, Hazazi), King Saud University, and from Nephrology division (Tarakji), St. George Medical Center, Kitchener, Ontario, and from the School of Medicine (Tarakji), McMaster University-Waterloo Region Campus, Ontario, Canada

Received 22nd September 2022. Accepted 25th January 2023.

*Address correspondence and reprint request to: Dr. Taim A. Muayqil, Neurology Unit, Department of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
E-mail: tmuayqil@ksu.edu.sa
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3044-641X>*

Cognitive impairment and dementia are common public health problems that have a huge burden on the healthcare system.¹ Patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) requiring dialysis are at risk for cognitive impairment²⁻⁴ which can manifest in the pre-dialysis period.⁵ Studies have found the prevalence of various degrees of cognitive impairment to range from 37–80% of patients on hemodialysis,^{3,4,6,7} with higher prevalence in the elderly.³ Cognitive impairments have been found to involve multiple domains but described mainly as executive impairments.⁸⁻¹¹ Dialysis patients have a high burden of vascular disease, and cognitive impairment from cerebrovascular disease is common in patients undergoing either hemodialysis (HD) or peritoneal dialysis (PD).¹² The pathophysiology may be attributed to microinflammation, malnutrition, and uremic metabolites.¹²⁻¹⁴

Detecting cognitive impairments in dialysis patients is imperative. Lee et al⁹ found that patients with varying degrees of severity of cognitive impairment are likely to go unnoticed and probably don't voice any concerns.⁹ Dialysis patients with cognitive impairment have worse survival than those with intact cognition,¹⁵ as well as a worse quality of life.¹⁶ Cognitive impairment has also been found to be related to depression and difficulty following instructions.^{4,15,17}

The Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA)¹⁸ is a well-established tool created to detect cognitive impairment. It is useful in elderly patients; however, its use is now expanding beyond that to different patient groups with different ages.¹⁹⁻²³ Although the Mini Mental State Exam (MMSE) is a time-efficient bedside test for cognitive function,²⁴ it may not detect cognitive impairments, when mild, in the general population or even in dialysis patients.⁹ The MoCA¹⁸ has been previously used to detect impairments in patients with ESRD and on dialysis, and appears to be more sensitive than the MMSE.⁹ The MoCA is an easy, quick, and comprehensive tool that can be readily used, compared to other neuropsychological assessments.¹⁸ In addition to the standard MoCA tool, a separate version was designed to detect impairments in those with significantly lower levels of education. This newer tool is known as the MoCA-Basic²⁵ and has not yet been widely used in dialysis patients.

Disclosure. Authors have no conflict of interests, and the work was not supported or funded by any drug company.

There is still insufficient literature evaluating the reliability of the Arabic MoCA versions in Saudi patients on dialysis, as well as in the Saudi population in general. There is still a relatively large number of older individuals with limited education,²⁶ making it relevant to investigate both versions of the MoCA in this population. Therefore, our main goal was to determine the reliability of both Arabic versions of the MoCA and assess the cognitive performance in dialysis patients with these two versions, which are designed to measure cognition in patients with different levels of education, in addition to determining the effects of demographic variables and comorbidities on the participants' performance.

Methods. Participants. We recruited participants from the outpatient dialysis unit at King Saud University Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from April 2019 to March 2020. The study was cross-sectional in design, and all 147 patients treated at the dialysis unit represented a convenience sample from which to recruit. Any patient on maintenance dialysis with PD or HD between the ages of 18 and 85 attending the unit on a regular basis was eligible for inclusion. We asked each patient who arrived for a dialysis session at the unit to participate. We excluded those with a history of previous central neurological disease or injury, such as ischemic stroke, inflammatory disease of any etiology (demyelination, infectious, or other autoimmune disorders), malignancy, previous parenchymal brain surgery, uncontrolled psychiatric disorders, or receiving certain drugs that could affect the central nervous system (sedatives, anti-cholinergic, opiates). Any patient with a known diagnosis of dementia was also excluded, as were those with significant motor or perceptual impairments that would interfere with the cognitive assessment (blindness, deafness, paralysis of the upper limbs) or might have led to the assignment of one dialysis type over the other. We also collected demographic variables related to gender, age, and years of education. Other collected variables were included in a binary format (present or absent) for associated diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, ischemic heart disease (IHD), dialysis type (HD vs PD), and the duration of dialysis in months "dialysis vintage." We obtained information from the patient, caregiver, and medical records.

Procedure. We performed cognitive assessments using the Arabic version of the standard MoCA (MoCA-A) and the Arabic basic version (MoCA-B).^{18,25} These tests are available in Arabic from the MoCA website, and permission to use the tests in research, with minor modification²⁷ to follow the local Arabic accent,

Table 1 - Baseline characteristics and scores; M±SD; row percentages are provided for the variables: dialysis vintage, diabetes, ischemic heart disease, and hypertension.

| Characteristics | Hemodialysis n=56 | Peritoneal dialysis n=27 | n (%), M±SD |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | | |
| Age | 51.41±15.32 | 47.04±15.7 | t (81) =1.21, p=0.23 |
| Gender | F 30 (53.6) M 26 (46.4) | F 7 (25.9) M 20 (74.1) | X ² (1)=5.63, p=0.02 |
| Years of education | 9.72±5.9 | 11.44±4.46 | t (80)=-1.34, p=0.18 |
| Dialysis vintage (months) | 66.42±74.68 | 41.04±37.88 | t (80)=1.66, p=0.1 |
| Ischemic heart disease | 16 (88.9) | 2 (11.1) | X ² (1)=4.8, p=0.028 |
| Diabetes | 23 (65.7) | 12 (34.4) | X ² (1)=0.09, p=0.77 |
| Hypertension | 46 (64.8) | 25 (35.2) | X ² (1)=1.61, p=0.21 |
| MoCA-A | 19.96±5.74, (range 7 – 30) | 23.11±3.78, (range 14 – 29) | t (78)=-2.57, p=0.01 |
| MoCA-B | 22.44±5.46, (range 9 – 30) | 25.56 (3.66), (range 16 – 29) | t (75)=-2.58, p=0.01 |

MoCA - Montreal Cognitive Assessment

was obtained from <http://mocatest.org>. Both scales are scored from 0–30, with lower scores indicating worse cognitive function. The basic version was designed to accommodate a population with lower educational achievements, and scores appear to be higher in the basic version compared to the standard.^{25,27} The scales assess multiple domains, including executive, visuospatial, memory, language, attention, and orientation. The test was administered in a quiet section of the unit while the patient underwent dialysis or had come for other evaluations; the assessments were carried out within 8–10 minutes. Both versions of the MoCA were applied to the participants, and the test administration was pseudo-randomized so that half of the participants performed the MoCA-A first, while the other half started with the MoCA-B. For reliability analysis, repeat testing was done after 2 to 4 weeks in 18 patients with the MoCA-A and in 18 patients with the MoCA-B. Considering that various cutoffs for impairment have been proposed in the literature,^{6,9,25,27–30} and considering the absence of validated cutoffs in the Saudi population, it was determined to analyze the total MoCA score results as a continuous variable for the primary analysis. To provide the reader with a comparison to other work on the topic, we identified four potential cutoffs, determined by reviewing the literature, at 26, 24, 22, and 20 out of 30 for both scales,^{6,27,30,31} and the prevalence of impairment according to each cutoff was estimated. The study was approved by the internal review board at the College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and all patients provided informed consent.

Analysis. We performed exploratory statistics to obtain baseline results from variables with t-tests

and chi-squared tests conducted to explore statistical significances between continuous and categorical variables, respectively. Age, years of education, dialysis vintage, and the MoCA scores were continuous variables, while the remaining were entered as binary variables. The MoCA test subcomponent scores were also estimated. We performed univariate regression to explore for an association of any of the participant variables or comorbidities with the MoCA score as the dependent variable. Significant variables in the univariate regression were then included in a multivariate regression, with the respective MoCA score as the dependent variable. Pearson’s test for correlation was performed to assess the relationship between the 2 versions of the MoCA and between the initial and repeat assessment to aid in reliability assessment. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the correlations and reliability of the subcomponents of the Arabic scales. We conducted a comparison with the repeat test means and an estimation of the intraclass correlation coefficients after obtaining repeated test scores. Stata 15 software was used for the analysis.

Results. Out of the 147 dialysis patients, 83 met the criteria for inclusion. The mean±SD for age was 49.99±15.48 years (range 18–83) and the mean (SD) for years of education was 10.29±5.5 (range 0–23); baseline characteristics are demonstrated in Table 1. The MoCA-A was completed by 80 participants, the MoCA-B was completed by 77, and both versions were completed by 74. The mean score of the MoCA-A was 21.03±5.35 (range 7–30), with a median of 22.5. The mean MoCA-B score was 23.45±5.14 (range 9–30), with a median of 25. The higher score on the MoCA-B

Table 2 - Univariate and multivariate regression for both versions of the MoCA scale.

| Regression | MoCA-A | | | MoCA-B | | |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| | Coef. (SE) | t-score, p-value | 95% C.I. | Coef. (SE) | t-score, p value | 95% C.I. |
| <i>Univariate</i> | | | | | | |
| age | -0.18 (0.03) | -5.49, < 0.0001 | -0.25, -0.12 | -0.19 (0.03) | -6.43, <0.0001 | -0.25, -0.13 |
| Years of education | 0.61 (0.08) | 7.28, < 0.0001 | 0.45, 0.78 | 0.57 (0.08) | 6.72, <0.0001 | 0.4, 0.74 |
| Dialysis Vintage | 0.004 (0.01) | 0.49, 0.624 | -0.01, 0.02 | 0.01(0.01) | 1.19, 0.24 | -0.01, 0.03 |
| Male gender | 2.23 (1.19) | 1.88, 0.064 | -0.13, 4.59 | 1.96 (1.17) | 1.68, 0.1 | -0.37, 4.29 |
| IHD | -1.75 (1.46) | -1.2, 0.23 | -4.65, 1.15 | -2.39 (1.46) | -1.63, 0.11 | -5.3, 0.53 |
| DM | -3.03 (1.17) | -2.58, 0.01 | -5.37, -0.7 | -3.08 (1.14) | -2.69, 0.009 | -5.35, -0.8 |
| HTN | -3.4 (1.64) | -2.07, 0.04 | -6.67, -0.13 | -3.41 (1.57) | -2.16, 0.034 | -6.55, -0.27 |
| Peritoneal Dialysis | 3.15 (1.22) | 2.58, 0.01 | 0.72, 5.58 | 3.12 (1.21) | 2.58, 0.012 | 0.71, 5.52 |
| <i>Multivariate</i> | | | | | | |
| Age | -0.1 (0.03) | -3.28, 0.002 | -0.16, -0.04 | -0.12 (0.03) | -4.19, <0.0001 | -0.18, -0.06 |
| Years of education | 0.47 (0.09) | 5.5, <0.0001 | 0.3, 0.64 | 0.39 (0.08) | 4.75, <0.0001 | 0.23, 0.55 |
| DM | -0.12 (0.93) | -0.13, 0.9 | -1.98, 1.74 | -0.37 (0.89) | -0.42, 0.67 | -2.15, 1.39 |
| HTN | -2.21 (1.21) | -1.82, 0.07 | -4.62, 0.21 | -1.98, (1.14) | -1.73, 0.09 | -4.3, 0.3 |
| Peritoneal Dialysis | 2.23 (0.91) | 2.46, 0.02 | 0.42, 4.04 | 1.97 (0.89) | 2.22, 0.03 | 0.21, 3.73 |

DM- Diabetes Mellitus, HTN - Hypertension, IHD - Ischemic Heart Disease, MoCA - Montreal Cognitive Assessment, SE - Standard Error, CI - Confidence Interval

in comparison to MoCA-A was statistically significant: $t(155)=-2.9, p=0.004$.

There was a large correlation between the 2 MoCA scales for the whole cohort ($r=0.84$). Cronbach's alpha for the 7 subcomponents of MoCA-A was 0.71, and for the 9 subcomponents of MoCA-B it was 0.76, indicating good internal consistency for both versions of the test. The combination of the subcomponents of both versions yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. The repeated MoCA-A obtained in 18 participants had a mean±SD of 20.79±6.46, (range 5–30), and also had a large correlation with the initial assessment $r=0.88$. The mean was also not significantly different between the initial and repeat assessments: $t(97)=0.17, p=0.87$. The repeated MoCA-B obtained from 18 participants had a mean±SD of 23.89±5.27, range 13–30, with a similarly large correlation with the first measurement 0.79, and no statistically significant different result, $t(94)=-0.33, p=0.74$, from the initial measurement. We calculated the intraclass correlations for both versions of the scales after repeating the assessment and estimated them at 0.81 (95% CI 0.65, 0.91) and 0.77 (95% CI 0.58, 0.89) for the MoCA-A and MoCA-B, respectively, indicating good test–retest reliability of both test versions.

Univariate and multivariate regression is demonstrated in Table 2. The statistically significant variables of age, years of education, diabetes, hypertension, and dialysis type were carried on to multivariate regression, where only age, years of education, and dialysis type remained

significant variables influencing both versions of the MoCA scale. Both models explained more than half of the variation in the scales. For the MoCA-A, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 73)=18.11, p<0.0001, R^2=0.55$; for the MoCA-B, the regression model was similarly significant, $F(5, 70)=18.77, p<0.0001, R^2=0.57$.

Finally, we estimated the individual scores obtained from the subcomponents of each MoCA scale. Table 3 demonstrates the mean scores for each subcomponent and the proportion of those who obtained a full score on each subcomponent. The proportion of participants with a complete score on the executive and calculation tasks were higher in the PD group on the MoCA-B scale, as were their mean scores. Whereas, the recall mean score was higher in the PD group on the MoCA-A scale (Table 3). Different cutoff values were set for the MoCA-A and MoCA-B, respectively, and the prevalence of cognitive impairment according to each cutoff is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Discussion. Here, we have demonstrated that both the standard Arabic and basic versions of the MoCA are reliable measures of cognition in a group of Arabic-speaking patients with end-stage renal disease undergoing dialysis. The scores are higher in the basic version and among participants undergoing PD.

The MoCA-B was designed to assess cognition in patients with limited levels of education,²⁵ making it a suitable assessment tool in our sample, which consisted

Table 3 - Results of each subcomponent from both MoCA scales, mean scores, and proportion of participants with a full score are displayed. N represents total participants who completed the task, n represents the number of participants who obtained a full score on a particular task, and SD: standard deviation.

| | HD | | | PD | | | P-value | HD | | PD | | P-value |
|------------------|----|------|------|----|------|------|---------|----|------------|----|------------|---------|
| | N | mean | sd | N | mean | sd | | n | proportion | n | proportion | |
| <i>MoCA-B</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Executive | 55 | 0.47 | 0.5 | 27 | 0.74 | 0.45 | 0.02* | 26 | 0.47 | 20 | 0.74 | 0.02* |
| Recall | 55 | 2.71 | 1.71 | 27 | 3.44 | 1.4 | 0.56 | 9 | 0.16 | 6 | 0.22 | 0.51 |
| Fluency | 55 | 1.2 | 0.1 | 27 | 1.44 | 0.13 | 0.15 | 21 | 0.38 | 15 | 0.56 | 0.12 |
| Orientation | 52 | 5.6 | 0.11 | 27 | 5.78 | 0.1 | 0.27 | 38 | 0.73 | 22 | 0.81 | 0.43 |
| Calculation | 55 | 2.02 | 1.05 | 27 | 2.56 | 0.85 | 0.02* | 25 | 0.45 | 20 | 0.74 | 0.01* |
| Abstraction | 55 | 2.22 | 1.1 | 27 | 2.56 | 0.8 | 0.16 | 33 | 0.6 | 19 | 0.7 | 0.38 |
| Visuospatial | 55 | 2.2 | 1.15 | 27 | 2.19 | 1 | 0.95 | 33 | 0.6 | 13 | 0.48 | 0.43 |
| Naming | 55 | 3.73 | 0.62 | 27 | 3.93 | 0.27 | 0.12 | 45 | 0.82 | 25 | 0.93 | 0.13 |
| Attention | 55 | 2.18 | 1.07 | 25 | 2.44 | 0.77 | 0.28 | 28 | 0.51 | 14 | 0.56 | 0.68 |
| <i>MoCA-A</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Visual/executive | 54 | 2.8 | 1.67 | 27 | 3.44 | 1.55 | 0.12 | 12 | 0.22 | 8 | 0.3 | 0.43 |
| Naming | 55 | 2.85 | 0.4 | 27 | 2.96 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 48 | 0.87 | 26 | 0.96 | 0.21 |
| Recall | 55 | 2.35 | 1.77 | 27 | 3.52 | 1.42 | 0.004* | 8 | 0.15 | 7 | 0.26 | 0.23 |
| Attention | 55 | 3.87 | 1.96 | 27 | 4.33 | 1.33 | 0.27 | 14 | 0.25 | 7 | 0.26 | 0.92 |
| Language | 55 | 1.6 | 0.83 | 27 | 1.78 | 0.75 | 0.35 | 8 | 0.15 | 4 | 0.15 | 1 |
| Abstract | 54 | 1.19 | 0.73 | 27 | 1.37 | 0.69 | 0.28 | 20 | 0.37 | 13 | 0.48 | 0.34 |
| Orientation | 55 | 5.36 | 0.95 | 27 | 5.7 | 0.54 | 0.9 | 34 | 0.62 | 20 | 0.74 | 0.28 |

MoCA - Montreal Cognitive Assessment, HD - Hemodialysis, PD - Peritoneal Dialysis

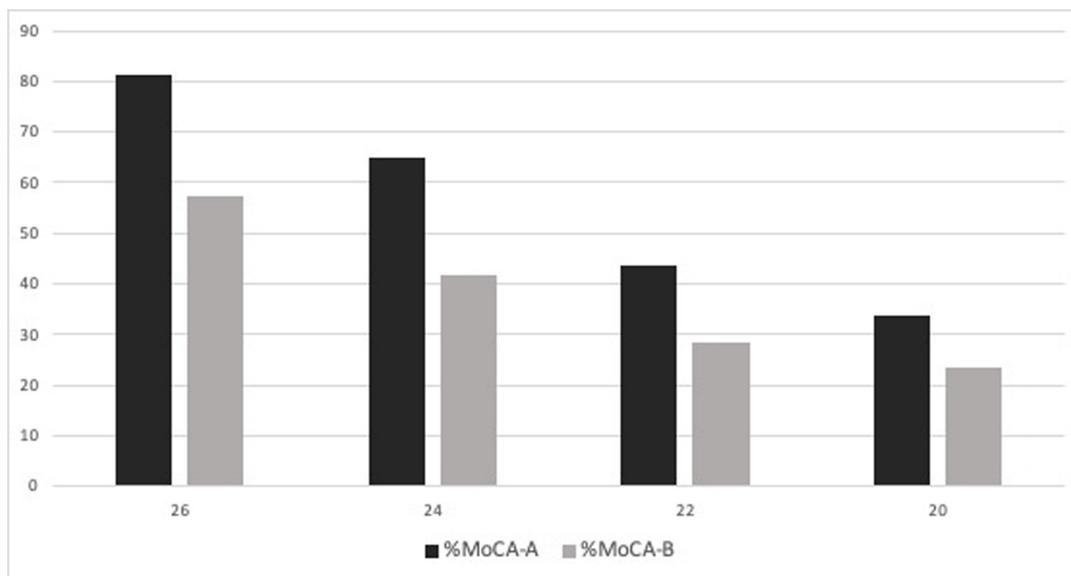


Figure 1 - Percent classified as cognitively impaired according to different cutoffs on the X-axis with both versions of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA).

of patients with varying levels of education; the higher scores on the MoCA-B were therefore not unexpected. Also, concurrently running an assessment with the two versions allowed us to demonstrate their high

correlation, which suggests that both Arabic versions are reasonable and reliable tools for evaluating the cognitive status of patients undergoing dialysis. Notably, the reliability coefficients were good in the current study,

with no differences in the means after repeat testing and large correlations between the attempts, indicating that it is a useful instrument in this type of population. The range of prevalence of cognitive impairment as measured by the multiple cutoffs here was 23.38% to 81.25%; this range fell within that found by multiple studies from different regions and demonstrates the effect a specific cutoff might have on prevalence.^{6,7,29,32} A large proportion of the MoCA scores appear to be lower than that determined by the normal cutoff of 26. The original MoCA was established with the inclusion of participants who were evaluated with various detailed neuropsychological assessments¹⁸ to obtain this cutoff value; this may partially explain why lower scores are also found in similar community-based studies.^{27,30,33} Different cutoffs have been determined in the West, even when the sample was obtained from within the same country but varied by race and ethnicity.³³ Cutoffs may even vary by disease conditions;³⁴ more specifically, the MoCA still needs standardization for patients with chronic renal disease.⁶ The use of cutoffs from other populations is generally not recommended, given the influence unique cultural backgrounds may have on patients when undergoing such assessments.³⁰

The mechanisms of cognitive decline in renal failure and dialysis patients are related to vascular factors rather than a primary neurodegenerative disorder.^{15,35} Diabetes and hypertension, in addition to other metabolic factors, were both associated with cognitive impairment in kidney failure patients; this included those on and not on dialysis, as well as renal transplant patients.³⁶ Diabetes, hypertension, and gender were not significantly associated with the scores in our sample; other studies have not found significant differences between genders with the MoCA.^{34,37} It is clear that age and years of education heavily influence the MoCA scores, and this has been repeatedly demonstrated in the literature.^{15,18,27,34,37} Generally, and not specifically to dialysis patients, diabetics might have a faster rate of cognitive decline;³⁸ however, strong associations have not always been reported in patients with kidney disease.^{5,39} The current literature also suggests that hypertension in general may have an association with cognitive impairment, with a possible protective role from antihypertensives.⁴⁰ In our sample, no strong association emerged for these variables with any of the MoCA scales in the multivariate analysis, and similarly, the literature has not consistently revealed an association.³⁹ Yet, the fact that the nature of cognitive impairment is likelier to be of a vascular etiology¹² is consistent with the notion that vascular risk factors play

a major role. Nonetheless, in a dialysis population where these risk factors are common, age and education still appear to be more strongly associated with cognitive impairment.^{15,18,27,34,37}

Participants on PD participants displayed higher scores on both versions of the scale even after correcting for other variables that were balanced between the two groups. Patients on dialysis have been found previously to have a 2-to-3-fold increase of cognitive impairment for PD and HD respectively.³⁷ Neumann et al¹¹ demonstrated that 30% of HD patients had cognitive impairment while it was present in about 15% of PD patients.¹¹ One possibility for the difference between the different dialysis types is related to the dynamic blood pressure shifts that occur in hemodialysis. Fluctuations and drops of blood pressure, as well as post-dialysis low blood pressures, are suggested to be related to brain injury and cognitive impairment. Larger drops in blood flow to the brain associate with progression of white matter disease on neuroimaging.^{14,39} Other factors considered to play a role in cognitive impairment related to patients on PD are hyponatremia, relative overhydration and cerebral microhemorrhages related to frequent anticoagulant use.^{14,41,42} These pathological events lead to subcortical cognitive deficits, such as executive dysfunction, which appeared to be more evident in HD patients on the MoCA-B test in comparison to PD patients.¹⁴

The executive component of the MoCA-A, namely the trail-B, is included with visuospatial assessment and clock drawing. These multiple assessments might partially explain why performance might appear better in the MoCA-B. Additionally, the executive component is a simpler version of the trail-B in the latter scale and therefore resulted in appreciable differences, given its narrow score range. It is not surprising to find frequent impairments in trail tests, as this seems to be quite difficult for participants, as demonstrated in earlier studies, who have lower educational achievements.³⁰ It is also likely that the timing of the delayed recall in version A is responsible for some difficulties with recall; it occurs much later in the assessment than in version B, and participants engage in other subcomponent tasks, in between registration and recall steps, that have language components that may intrude into the delayed recall. In support of this, memory domain deficits were one of the deficit types most frequently found in dialysis patients, which likely resulted from impairments in retrieval.⁹

Among limitations to consider, is the smaller number of patients undergoing PD. Patients were recruited from a single center which narrows the demographic

spectrum. Also, since intact cognition is important for patients undergoing PD due to the management required by the patient or care giver at home, the possibility of selection bias exists where the prescribing nephrologist might have been more selective in prescribing PD to certain patients. This should be considered even if the education years, age, dialysis vintage and other variables were balanced between groups. Prospective cohort studies that include factors responsible for dialysis type selection would be required to elucidate this point further. What needs further exploration, however, is identifying appropriate cutoffs in patients undergoing dialysis, which will require future research with larger numbers.

In conclusion, the Arabic versions of the MoCA can be reliably used to measure cognition in dialysis patients. Patients undergoing HD appear to be at a higher risk for cognitive decline compared to those undergoing PD, with age and education representing important variables influencing performance. Given the ubiquitous nature of cognitive impairment in patients receiving dialysis and the ease of administering the MoCA scales, treating physicians should have a low threshold to screen for impairments. Both Arabic versions of the MoCA can be used reliably as screening instruments for cognitive impairment in this population. The choice of which version should be used depends on the patient's level of education. This will help identify cognitive impairments early or detect deterioration of cognition over time in order to better care for patients receiving dialysis.

References

- Mishra N, Mohan D, Fuad S, Basavanagowda DM, Alrashid ZA, Kaur A, et al. The Association Between Hypertension and Cognitive Impairment, and the Role of Antihypertensive Medications: A Literature Review. *Cureus* 2020; 12: e12035.
- Carson N, Leach L, Murphy KJ. A re-examination of Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) cutoff scores. *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2018; 33: 379-388.
- Paraizo Mde A, Almeida AL, Pires LA, Abrita RS, Crivellari MH, Pereira Bdos S, et al. [Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) screening mild cognitive impairment in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) pre-dialysis]. *J Bras Nefrol* 2016; 38: 31-41. Portuguese
- Shea YF, Lam MF, Lee MS, Mok MY, Lui SL, Yip TP, et al. Prevalence of Cognitive Impairment Among Peritoneal Dialysis Patients, Impact on Peritonitis and Role of Assisted Dialysis. *Perit Dial Int* 2016; 36: 284-290.
- Lu R, Xu C, Li Y, Yu L, Shao X, Xie K, et al. The Incidence Prognosis and Risk Factors of Cognitive Impairment in Maintenance Haemodialysis Patients. *Blood Purif* 2019; 47: 101-108.
- Nasreddine ZS, Phillips NA, Bedirian V, Charbonneau S, Whitehead V, Collin I, et al. The Montreal Cognitive Assessment, MoCA: a brief screening tool for mild cognitive impairment. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 2005; 53: 695-699.
- Nicholas P, Green T, Purtell L, Bonner A. A cross-sectional study exploring cognitive impairment in kidney failure. *J Ren Care* 2022; 48: 93-101.
- Kalirao P, Pederson S, Foley RN, Kolste A, Tupper D, Zaun D, et al. Cognitive impairment in peritoneal dialysis patients. *Am J Kidney Dis* 2011; 57: 612-620.
- Adlimoghaddam A, Roy B, Albeni BC. Future Trends and the Economic Burden of Dementia in Manitoba: Comparison with the Rest of Canada and the World. *Neuroepidemiology* 2018; 51: 71-81.
- Guenzani D, Buoli M, Caldiroli L, Carnevali GS, Serati M, Vezza C, et al. Malnutrition and inflammation are associated with severity of depressive and cognitive symptoms of old patients affected by chronic kidney disease. *J Psychosom Res* 2019; 124: 109783.
- Muayqil TA, Tarakji AR, Khattab AM, Balbaid NT, Al-Dawalibi AM, Alqarni SA, et al. Comparison of Performance on the Clock Drawing Test Using Three Different Scales in Dialysis Patients. *Behav Neurol* 2020; 2020: 7963837.
- Salazar-Felix NA, Martin-Del-Campo F, Cueto-Manzano AM, Romo-Flores ML, Velazquez-Vidaurre AL, Sanchez-Soriano A, et al. Prevalence of mild cognitive impairment in automated peritoneal dialysis patients 2021. *Nephrol Dial Transplant* 2021; 36: 2106-2111.
- Chalhoub NE, Luggen ME. Screening for cognitive dysfunction in systemic lupus erythematosus: the Montreal Cognitive Assessment Questionnaire and the Informant Questionnaire on Cognitive Decline in the Elderly. *Lupus* 2019; 28: 51-58.
- Drew DA, Weiner DE, Sarnak MJ. Cognitive Impairment in CKD: Pathophysiology, Management, and Prevention. *Am J Kidney Dis* 2019; 74: 782-790.
- Cui L, Chen W, Yu X, Ju C. The relationship between cognitive function and having diabetes in patients treated with hemodialysis. *Int J Nurs Sci* 2020; 7: 60-65.
- Tamura MK, Yaffe K. Dementia and cognitive impairment in ESRD: diagnostic and therapeutic strategies. *Kidney Int* 2011; 79: 14-22.
- Lee SH, Cho A, Min YK, Lee YK, Jung S. Comparison of the montreal cognitive assessment and the mini-mental state examination as screening tests in hemodialysis patients without symptoms. *Renal Failure* 2018; 40: 323-330.
- Neumann D, Mau W, Wienke A, Girndt M. Peritoneal dialysis is associated with better cognitive function than hemodialysis over a one-year course. *Kidney Int* 2018; 93: 430-438.
- Shin DJ, Kim T, Jung DU, Moon JJ, Jeon DW, Kim SJ, et al. Association between Dialysis Adequacy and Cognition in Patients with Peritoneal Dialysis. *Psychiatry Investig* 2020; 17: 1143-1148.
- Julayanont P, Tangwongchai S, Hemrungronj S, Tunvirachaisakul C, Phanthumchinda K, Hongswat J, et al. The Montreal Cognitive Assessment-Basic: A Screening Tool for Mild Cognitive Impairment in Illiterate and Low-Educated Elderly Adults. *Neurology* 2015; 63: 2550-2554.
- Angermann S, Schier J, Baumann M, Steubl D, Hauser C, Lorenz G, et al. Cognitive Impairment is Associated with Mortality in Hemodialysis Patients. *J Alzheimers Dis* 2018; 66: 1529-1537.
- Hu MT, Szewczyk-Krolikowski K, Tomlinson P, Nithi K, Rolinski M, Murray C, et al. Predictors of cognitive impairment in an early stage Parkinson's disease cohort. *Mov Disord* 2014; 29: 351-359.

23. Luo Y, Murray AM, Guo YD, Tian R, Ye PP, Li X, et al. Cognitive impairment and associated risk factors in older adult hemodialysis patients: a cross-sectional survey. *Front Neurol* 2020; 10: 12542.
24. Stolwyk RJ, O'Neill MH, McKay AJ, Wong DK. Are cognitive screening tools sensitive and specific enough for use after stroke? A systematic literature review. *Stroke* 2014; 45: 3129-3134.
25. Guerville F, De Souto Barreto P, Coley N, Andrieu S, Mangin JF, Chupin M, et al. Kidney Function and Cognitive Decline in Older Adults: Examining the Role of Neurodegeneration. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2021; 69: 651-659.
26. Palta P, Carlson MC, Crum RM, Colantuoni E, Sharrett AR, Yasar S, et al. Diabetes and Cognitive Decline in Older Adults: The Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory Study. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 2018; 73: 123-130.
27. Lu R, Xu C, Li Y, Yu L, Shao X, Xie K, et al. The Incidence Prognosis and Risk Factors of Cognitive Impairment in Maintenance Haemodialysis Patients. *Blood Purification* 2019; 47: 101-108.
28. Drew DA, Tighiouart H, Rollins J, Duncan S, Babroudi S, Scott T, et al. Evaluation of Screening Tests for Cognitive Impairment in Patients Receiving Maintenance Hemodialysis. *J Am Soc Nephrol* 2020; 31: 855-864.
29. Thomann AE, Berres M, Goettel N, Steiner LA, Monsch AU. Enhanced diagnostic accuracy for neurocognitive disorders: a revised cut-off approach for the Montreal Cognitive Assessment. *Alzheimers Res Ther* 2020; 12: 39.
30. Kurella Tamura M, Larive B, Unruh ML, Stokes JB, Nissenon A, Mehta RL, et al. Prevalence and correlates of cognitive impairment in hemodialysis patients: the Frequent Hemodialysis Network trials. *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol*. 2010; 5: 1429-1438.
31. Muayqil TA, Alamri NK, Alqahtani AM, Julaidan SS, Alsuhaibani R, Nafisah I, et al. Normative and Equated Data of the Original and Basic Versions of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment among Community Dwelling Saudi Arabians. *Behav Neurol* 2021; 2021: 5395627.
32. Zheng K, Wang H, Hou B, You H, Yuan J, Luo K, et al. Malnutrition-inflammation is a risk factor for cerebral small vessel diseases and cognitive decline in peritoneal dialysis patients: a cross-sectional observational study. *BMC Nephrol* 2017; 18: 366.
33. Amatneeks TM, Hamdan AC. Sensitivity and specificity of the Brazilian version of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment - Basic (MoCA-B) in chronic kidney disease. *Trends Psychiatry Psychother* 2019; 41: 327-333.
34. Statistics SG authority for. Demography survey. Saudi Arabia: 2016. From: https://www.stats.gov.sa/sites/default/files/en-demographic-research-2016_2.pdf
35. Folstein MF, Folstein SE, McHugh PR. "Mini-mental state". A practical method for grading the cognitive state of patients for the clinician. *J Psychiatr Res* 1975; 12: 189-98.
36. Bruijnen CJWH, Dijkstra BAG, Walvoort SJW, Markus W, VanDerNagel JEL, Kessels RPC, et al. Prevalence of cognitive impairment in patients with substance use disorder. *Drug Alcohol Rev* 2019; 38: 435-442.
37. Gavrilovic A, Toncev G, Boskovic Matic T, Vesic K, Ilic Zivojinovic J, Gavrilovic J. Impact of epilepsy duration, seizure control and EEG abnormalities on cognitive impairment in drug-resistant epilepsy patients. *Acta Neurol Belg*. 2019; 119: 403-410.
38. Murray AM, Tupper DE, Knopman DS, Gilbertson DT, Pederson SL, Li S, et al. Cognitive impairment in hemodialysis patients is common. *Neurology* 2006; 67: 216-223.
39. Hussien H, Apetrii M, Covic A. Health-related quality of life in patients with chronic kidney disease. *Expert Rev Pharmacoecon Outcomes Res* 2021; 21: 43-54.
40. O'Driscoll C, Shaikh M. Cross-Cultural Applicability of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA): A Systematic Review. *J Alzheimers Dis* 2017; 58: 789-801.
41. Wong A, Xiong YY, Kwan PW, Chan AY, Lam WW, Wang K, et al. The validity, reliability and clinical utility of the Hong Kong Montreal Cognitive Assessment (HK-MoCA) in patients with cerebral small vessel disease. *Dement Geriatr Cogn Disord* 2009; 28: 81-87.
42. Milani SA, Marsiske M, Cottler LB, Chen X, Striley CW. Optimal cutoffs for the Montreal Cognitive Assessment vary by race and ethnicity. *Alzheimers Dement (Amst)* 2018; 10: 773-781.