

FALSE MEMORIES AND AGING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON HEALTHY OLDER PEOPLE, MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Friday, September 12, 2025 12:30 PM (1h 45m)

False memories refer to the phenomenon of remembering events that never happened, or remembering them quite differently from the way they happened. In aging, this phenomenon is often confused with normal episodic memory decline and therefore under-investigated, particularly in pathological conditions. According to the literature, healthy aging, Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), and Alzheimer's Disease (AD) are associated with an increased incidence of false memories, although findings remain inconsistent.

The aim of this systematic review is to examine the production of false memories in healthy and pathological aging, comparing performance between both patient groups.

The review process was conducted according to the PRISMA statement. A total of 27 studies were included, conducted from 1999 to 2022, and the whole sample had a mean age that ranged from 66 to 86 years. Of these, eighteen studies focused on AD, three on MCI, and six explored both conditions.

The results present a heterogeneous picture: in some studies, AD patients produced more false memories than controls; in others, fewer or a similar amount. Likewise, results for MCI are inconsistent, with some studies reporting a higher rate of false memories compared to healthy aging.

This variability is largely due to the wide range of assessment tools used. The divergence in findings is discussed through the lens of three main theoretical frameworks: the Fuzzy-Trace Theory, the Source Monitoring Theory, and the Activation/Monitoring Theory.

Understanding the variability in producing false memories in aging and the theories explaining its origin is key to guiding future clinical research.

If you're submitting a symposium talk, what's the symposium title?

If you're submitting a symposium, or a talk that is part of a symposium, is this a junior symposium?

Primary author: DELLA RAGIONE, Elena

Co-authors: MARSELLI, Giulia (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, and Health Studies, the "Sapienza" University of Roma, Roma, Italy); CORBO, Ilaria (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, and Health Studies, the "Sapienza" University of Roma, Roma, Italy); Dr CASAGRANDE, Maria (Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, and Health Studies, the "Sapienza" University of Roma, Roma, Italy)

Presenter: DELLA RAGIONE, Elena

Session Classification: Lunch and poster 2

Track Classification: Memory