
Vascular disease-is it a substrate for the changes with aging in thought and affect?

J. Richard Jennings*†¹

¹University of Pittsburgh (PITT) – 3811 O'Hara Street WPIC Pittsburgh, PA 15213, United States

Abstract

The physiological changes as time accumulates can be labeled aging, but we have yet to determine whether a specific aging process occurs or whether what we call aging is the accumulation of the chronic diseases pandemic with age-cardiovascular disease, arthritis, and cancers. Any study of the aging of psychological characteristics, e.g. change in affect or cognition, with a representative sample of the elderly is in fact also a study of these chronic diseases. An attempt to study pure aging must first be acknowledged as not representative of the population and must second cope with the likelihood that some disease is present but not detected despite careful screening. If an independent process of aging does exist, it likely co-exists with chronic disease and it may not be a single process but multiple processes with varying influences on different psychological functions. Various proposed markers of aging will be discussed. The issue will be illustrated (but hardly solved) by illustrating aging and disease effects in aging samples that have blood pressure assessed. Blood pressure is of particular interest as some researchers have characterized the psychological effects associated with hypertension as accelerated aging. Affective and cognitive correlates of blood pressure/aging(?) as well as their functional brain representations will be discussed.

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: JenningsJR@upmc.edu