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3 **NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL AND NEUROIMAGING OUTCOME**
 4 **OF HIV-ASSOCIATED PROGRESSIVE MULTIFOCAL**
 5 **LEUKOENCEPHALOPHATHY IN THE ERA OF**
 6 **ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY**

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1 **Aims:** The purpose of the present case is to describe the functional outcome of a patient
2 with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and progressive multifocal leukoencephalopa-
3 thy (PML) on treatment with antiretroviral therapy using a multidisciplinary approach.

4 **Methods:** Neuropsychological tests and diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) were obtained at
5 baseline and after 12 months to define the severity of white matter damage. Neuropsycholo-
6 gical and neuroimaging data were compared to an HIV-infected patient without PML
7 and with good immune system health, and to a second HIV-infected patient without PML
8 but with notable immunosuppression.

9 **Results:** Review of the HIV/PML patient's cognitive data at both time points revealed sig-
10 nificant impairments compared to the control subjects. Similarly, the HIV/PML patient's
11 white matter lesion load and whole brain volume were markedly different from the control
12 subjects at both time points. The tractography-defined metrics suggest significant white
13 matter fiber loss associated with HIV/PML that was not evident in either HIV control
14 patient.

15 **Discussion:** Our findings suggest that PML is associated with marked cognitive and
16 neuroimaging abnormalities in the context of antiretroviral therapy.

17 **Integrative Significance:** To our knowledge this is the first study to integrate both
18 quantitative DTI and cognitive assessment to define white matter damage associated with
19 HIV and PML. This integrative approach provides a robust methodology to examine the
20 integrity of brain systems mediating cognitive function.

21 *Keywords:* HIV; PML; neuropsychology; neuroimaging; diffusion tensor imaging.

1. Introduction

23 Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) is a potentially terminal illness
24 that develops in the context of significant immunosuppression. The disease is caused
25 by a reactivation of the JC virus, which targets and eventually destroys oligoden-
26 drocytes via lytic infection [12]. PML is characterized by aggressive deterioration
27 of white matter pathways throughout the subcortical brain parenchyma. The white
28 matter damage can be visualized on standard magnetic resonance imaging (MRI),
29 particularly using acquisition sequences sensitive to white matter alterations (e.g.,
30 fluid attenuated inversion recovery; FLAIR).

31 PML has been a complicating factor associated with human immunodeficiency
32 virus (HIV), however, antiretroviral treatment (ART) has significantly modified the
33 natural course of PML. ART has improved the mortality rate from 90% to approx-
34 imately 50% [1, 12]. The prevalence of PML associated with HIV has also declined
35 significantly in the era of ART [14], yet a number of patients remain infected with
36 the virus and the neurological and functional outcome remains unclear. Several
37 studies have demonstrated regression of MRI abnormalities after therapy with ART
38 [6, 7, 13] and neurological function improves in approximately 50% of patients [4].
39 Little is known, however, about the cognitive outcome of HIV-infected patients who
40 are living with PML over an extended period of time.

41 In the present case report, we describe the cognitive and neuroimaging out-
42 come of an HIV-infected patient with PML who had been treated with ART. The
43 case report is novel in three respects. First, we describe 12-month longitudinal

1 neuropsychological outcome of a patient with PML *treated with ART*. Second, we
2 used two different *in vivo* imaging modalities (FLAIR) and diffusion tensor imaging
3 — DTI to quantify and visualize severity of white matter damage in this patient.
4 Third, we compared the cognitive performances and severity of white matter dam-
5 age in this patient to two demographically-matched HIV-infected patients without
6 PML who differed in terms of the degree of immunosuppression.

7 2. Methods

8 2.1. *Participants*

9 HIV/PML Patient: The patient is a 42 year-old male who was enrolled in a study
10 of cognitive dysfunction and neuroimaging abnormalities associated with HIV. He
11 was also co-enrolled in a study of CSF abnormalities associated with PML at a
12 separate academic institution [8]. At the time of involvement in the cognitive study,
13 the patient's CD4 cell count was 120 cells/mm³, and his plasma viral load was 6,000
14 copies per ml. A nadir CD4 count of 63 was recorded in 2001. JC viral infection was
15 initially defined by neuroradiographic and clinical evaluation. However, he was sub-
16 sequently enrolled in study of PML at a regional academic center, and was found to
17 exhibit JC-specific cytotoxic T lymphocytes in peripheral blood mononuclear cells.
18 There was no history of opportunistic infections other than the JC virus. The patient
19 had become infected with HIV via sexual contact, and he denied a history of intra-
20 venous drug abuse. The patient did have a history of marijuana use, however, his
21 use did not meet DSM-IV criteria [2] for abuse. Similarly, he did not meet DSM-IV
22 criteria for current affective disorder, though he was receiving treatment with an
23 antidepressant. The patient had been diagnosed with HIV in 1984 and diagnosed
24 with PML in 1999 at which time he presented with gait imbalance and multiple falls,
25 as well as multiple white matter lesions on MRI. Medical records reveal that his neu-
26 rological symptoms improved briefly but deteriorated again by 2002. A neurological
27 exam at that time revealed that he was alert, oriented, with good psychomotor
28 speed, memory, and speech, but "marked" impairment in attention and construc-
29 tive apraxia, as well as multiple errors on a test of antisaccadic eye movements.
30 At the time of his enrollment in the current study (2002), his treatment regimen
31 included Efavirenz, Lamivudine, Stavudine Cotrimoxazole, Fluconazole, Alprazolam
32 and Fluoxetine. He completed 12 years of high school and was employed at the time
33 of participation, working as a local community advocate on a part-time basis.

34 HIV-positive comparison patients: The immunologically healthy individual was
35 a 49 year-old male enrolled in the same parent study described above. At study
36 enrollment, his CD4 lymphocyte count was 864 cells/mm³ and his plasma viral
37 load was 23 copies per ml. His nadir CD4 count of 272 was recorded in 2002. He
38 had no history of opportunistic infections. He had been diagnosed with HIV for
39 approximately 24 months and his current treatment regimen included Efavirenz,

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1 Lamivudine and Zidovudine. Psychosocial and psychiatric histories were unremark-
able. He completed 12 years of education and was employed as a cook at the time
3 of study participation.

5 The immunocompromised patient included a 51 year-old male. At study enroll-
ment, his CD4 lymphocyte count was 225 cells/mm³ and his plasma viral load was
7 <75 copies per ml. His nadir CD4 count of 36 was recorded in 1997, at which time
he presented with an oral leukoplakia and thrush, but no CNS opportunistic infec-
9 tion. The patient was positive for hepatitis C. He had been diagnosed with HIV and
hepatitis C since 1997. His current treatment regimen was Cotrimoxazole, Norvir,
Lamivudine, Zidovudine, and Saquinavir. His psychosocial and psychiatric histories
11 were unremarkable. He completed 13 years of education and was unemployed at the
time of participation.

13 A reference group of 25 seronegative healthy male subjects from the Brain
Resource International Brain Database (BRID; [10]) was also included to compare
15 neuropsychological performances. The healthy control sample reported no history
of learning disability, head injury, or any medical/psychiatric history that could
17 confound cognitive function. The healthy sample had been recruited from the com-
munity, and averaged 44.8 (3.6) years of age, and 12.9 (1.7) years of education.

19 **2.2. Cognitive assessment**

All three patients completed the BRID computerized battery of cognitive measures.
21 The computerized battery is both reliable [20] and valid [15]. The computerized
battery was administered on a touch-screen (NEC MultiSync LCD 1530V). The cog-
23 nitive tests were administered using standardized task instructions presented via
headphones and visual screen display. All responses to the tests were recorded via
25 the touch-screen or recorded as .wav files. Each cognitive test was preceded by a
practice trial and participants were required to successfully complete the practice
27 trial prior to the test trial for each measure. In the event that an individual failed a
practice trial, the computerized battery immediately moved on to the next test in the
29 battery. The battery included tests examining motor tapping, sustained attention,
psychomotor speed, cognitive flexibility, and response inhibition. The HIV/PML
31 patient repeated the computerized tests after one year, using an alternate version of
each measure except the motor tapping task. These domains are known to be sen-
33 sitive to cognitive impairments associated with HIV and white matter damage [16].

2.3. Neuroimaging

35 Neuroimaging was acquired using a Siemens 1.5 Tesla Symphony scanner. The imag-
ing sequence consisted of a sagittal MPRAGE T1, an axial FLAIR, and a sagittal
37 diffusion imaging sequence. The results of the MPRAGE T1 sequence were visu-
ally inspected for any neurological abnormalities including lesions and/or tumors
39 that might significantly alter cognitive and imaging findings. The FLAIR sequence

1 was a clinical sequence with the following parameters: TE = 105, TR = 6000,
192 × 256 matrix, 5 mm thick slices, 2 mm gap, one excitation. The commercial pro-
3 gram ANALYZE was used to quantify the hyperintensities in the FLAIR images for
all three patients separately in three anatomical regions; 1) hyperintensities in the
5 centrum semiovale (CSH), 2) hyperintensities in the periventricular region (PVH,
those confluent with the lateral ventricles), and 3) hyperintensities in the area of the
7 subcortical nuclei (SCH, those adjacent to or in the area of the caudate, lentiform,
or thalami nuclei). Using a trained rater and a thresholding technique, the hyper-
9 intense regions from surrounding parenchyma for each patient were identified. The
number of pixels were counted for each slice and summed separately for each of
11 the anatomical regions. Whole brain volume was also calculated by summing the
segmented pixels classified as brain tissue across all slices.

13 2.3.1. *Diffusion tensor imaging*

For diffusion tensor imaging, we used the Siemens MDDW protocol with no par-
15 tial echos to image the entire brain. These co-registered sagittal double spin-echo,
echo planar diffusion-weighted images were collected using the following param-
17 eters: TR = 7200; TE = 156; three acquisitions with offset in slice direction by
0.0 mm, 1.7 mm, and 3.4 mm; 5 mm thick slices; 0.1 mm inter-slice spacing, 30 slices
19 per acquisition; 128 × 128 matrix; 21.7 cm FOV. Diffusion gradients were applied in
12 non-collinear directions with two b magnitudes (0 and 1000 mm/s², NEX = 3).
21 The three acquisitions were interleaved to provide isotropic 1.7 mm sampling.

23 2.3.2. *ROI analysis*

A region of interest (ROI) method using ANALYZE 6.0[®] was employed to examine
25 DTI scalar metrics within defined neuroanatomical regions. Fractional anisotropy
(FA) maps were reoriented along the ACPC axis then registered with the T1
MPRAGE sequence for accurate placement of ROIs. ROIs were sampled in three
27 adjacent axial slices where the caudate was widest. Small 3 mm by 3 mm wide ROIs
were placed in genu and splenium of the corpus callosum, right and left frontal
29 forceps minor, right and left anterior limb of the internal capsule, right and left
posterior limb of the internal capsule, and the right and left genu of the internal
31 capsule (see Fig. 1). FA for each of the ROIs was back-calculated using the scan
parameters.

33 2.3.3. *Tractographic analysis*

Integral paths along the direction of fastest diffusion were calculated through the
35 DTI data starting at randomly selected points near each point in a grid with 1.7 mm
spacing in all three coordinate directions. Paths were integrated in both directions
37 as long as linear anisotropy was greater than 0.1 [20]. Short paths and those similar
to paths already generated were culled, typically leaving several thousand paths [18].

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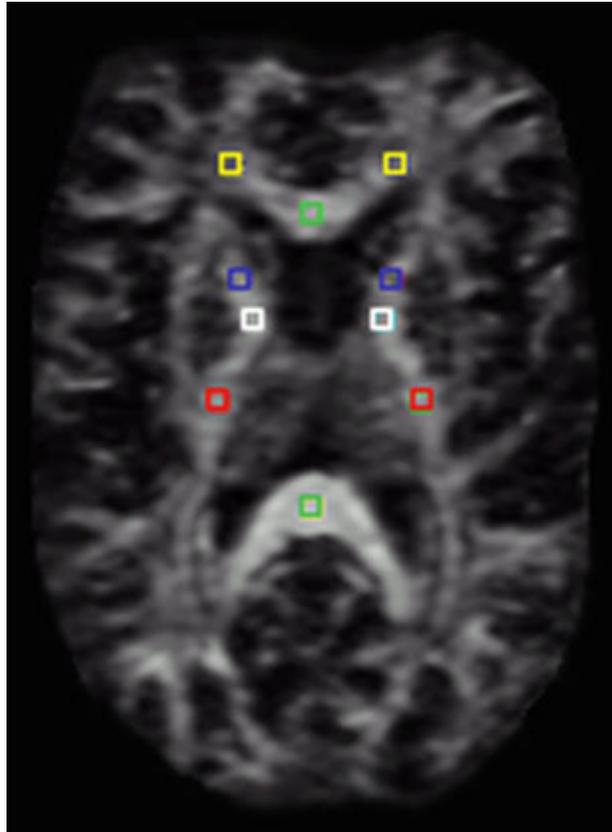


Fig. 1. Region of interest placement to quantify diffusion tensor data.

1 All resulting paths as well as paths with an average linear anisotropy greater than
2 0.25 were visualized on a 3D display together with a visual representation of the
3 lateral ventricles. Tracts of interest (TOI) were interactively selected using a method
4 similar to the volume of interest (VOI) approach of Sherbondy and colleagues [17].
5 The entire brain was treated as one such tract; a second TOI was defined as those
6 paths that crossed the midplane. For each TOI, the following metrics were calculated:
7 number of paths, total length of paths, and total length of paths weighted by linear
8 anisotropy. The same three metrics were calculated including only those paths for
9 which the average linear anisotropy was greater than 0.25.

3. Results

11 3.1. Neuropsychological comparisons

12 Review of the baseline cognitive data revealed that all three HIV-infected patients
13 earned mean scores more than 1.5 standard deviations below average on multiple
14 tests compared to the healthy control sample, suggesting a significant effect of HIV
15 status on cognitive function (Table 1). Compared to the healthy control sample,

Table 1. Cognitive performances for the healthy controls, the HIV/PML patient and the HIV patients.

Cognitive Measure	Healthy Controls		HIV CD4 = 864 cells/mm ³ (good immune health)		HIV CD4 = 225 cells/mm ³ (poor immune health)		HIV/PML		
	Baseline		Baseline		Baseline		Baseline		
	Mean (SD)	Raw (T-score)	Range	Raw (T-score)	Range	Raw (T-score)	Range	Raw (T-score)	
Motor tapping (total)	181 (15.8)	71 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	164 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	94 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	125 (<1)	Sev. Impaired
# Dominant hand Sustained attention	.62 (1.4)	0 (54)	Average	1 (47)	Average	19 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	19 (<1)	Sev. Impaired
# False alarms	1.5 (2.5)	2 (48)	Average	4 (40)	Low Average	6 (32)	Mild Impaired	6 (32)	Mild Impaired
Psychomotor speed	13.7 (4.0)	24 (24)	Mod. Impaired	17.2 (41)	Low Average	31 (7)	Sev. Impaired	43 (<1)	Sev. Impaired
Completion time (s)	29.5 (8.6)	56 (19)	Sev. Impaired	44.5 (33)	Borderline	>60 (<10)	Sev. Impaired	>60 (<10)	Sev. Impaired
Cognitive flexibility		2.1				3.6		3.1	
Completion time (s)									
Connection time (s)									
Reading speed									
Total # correct	17.2 (2.2)	16 (45)	Low Average	13 (31)	Borderline	10 (17)	Sev. Impaired	10 (17)	Sev. Impaired
Executive Function	37.3 (20.2)	50 (44)	Low. Average	83 (27)	Mild Impaired	154 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	187 (<1)	Sev. Impaired
# Maze errors									
# Overtakes	2.3 (0.7)	23 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	40 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	90 (<1)	Sev. Impaired	140 (<1)	Sev. Impaired

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1 the HIV/PML patient performed in the severely impaired range on all cognitive
 2 measures. The observation that the HIV/PML patient performed markedly worse
 3 than the age- and education-matched HIV patients suggests that poor cognitive per-
 4 formances evident by the HIV/PML patient were not due to HIV alone. The follow-
 5 up assessment of the PML patient, completed 12 months later, revealed consistent
 6 deficits across cognitive domains, with evidence of poorer function on measures of
 7 executive function and psychomotor speed, yet improved performance on measures
 8 of sustained attention and motor tapping.

9 **3.2. Structural neuroimaging**

10 Structural imaging data also revealed notable differences between the three HIV
 11 patients at the baseline assessment (Table 2). The HIV/PML patient exhibited a
 12 lower brain volume compared to the two HIV patients, and the HIV/PML patient
 13 exhibited notably greater lesion load in the white matter compared to the HIV
 14 patients on the FLAIR sequence; note we did not identify any clear evidence of
 15 white matter abnormalities in the HIV patient with good immunological health.
 16 A repeat FLAIR conducted approximately 12 months later demonstrated notably
 17 increased white matter involvement for the HIV/PML patient.

18 **3.3. Diffusion tensor imaging**

19 ROI Analysis of the DTI data revealed decreased FA values for the HIV/PML
 20 patient in the forceps minor, anterior limb of the internal capsule, and the splenium
 21 of the corpus callosum compared to the other two HIV patients (Table 3). There
 22 was no noticeable change in the genu of the corpus callosum, genu of the internal
 23 capsule, or the posterior limb of the internal capsule. Examination of the novel DTI
 24 metrics revealed a dose-dependent relationship across the three subjects on each of
 25 the dependent variables (Table 4; Fig. 2). Specifically, the HIV patient with good

Table 2. Neuroimaging comparisons between the HIV patients and the HIV/PML patient.

MRI Measure	HIV	HIV	HIV/PML	
	CD4 = 864 cells/mm ³ (good immune health)	CD4 = 225 cells/mm ³ (poor immune health)	Baseline	1 Year
SH lesion load				
Centrum semiovale	0	0	1.12*	1.05
Periventricular hyperintensities	0	0	0.24	0.49
Subcortical hyperintensities	0	0	0.02	0.03
WBV	963.63 cm ³	950.20 cm ³	841.74 cm ³	899.86 cm ³

*Ratio to WBV. SH = subcortical hyperintensities, WBV = whole brain volume

Table 3. Fractional anisotropy values for each ROI.

	Forceps Minor		Gene of the Internal Capsule		Posterior Limb of the Internal Capsule		Anterior Limb of Internal Capsule		Corpus Callosum	
	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	Splenium	Genu
	HIV/PML	0.22	0.43	0.36	0.42	0.71	0.70	0.67	0.69	0.20
HIV healthy	0.52	0.48	0.72	0.72	0.66	0.64	0.73	0.78	0.83	0.91
HIV immune compromised	0.62	0.45	0.54	0.63	0.68	0.70	0.75	0.67	0.76	0.80

Table 4. Streamtube-based metrics.

	Unthresholded			Thesholded (minimum linear anisotropy = 0.25)		
	Number of Paths	Total Length (mm)	Weighted Length (mm)	Number of Paths	Total Length (mm)	Weighted Length (mm)
HIV good immune health	5290	118606	28804	1011	46553	14808
HIV poor immune health	5304	116619	27432	844	37523	11968
HIV/PML	4250	84837	19687	804	29679	9090

1 immune health exhibited more streamtube paths, greater fiber length and greater
 2 weighted fiber length compared to the other two patients. Similarly, the HIV patient
 3 with poor immune health had superior results on these same indices compared to
 4 the HIV/PML patient. These results suggest that HIV/PML was characterized by
 5 the greatest DTI abnormalities on both standard metrics (FA) and the novel metrics
 6 presented in the current study.

7 4. Discussion

8 This is the first report of neuropsychological, structural neuroimaging, and DTI in a
 9 patient with HIV and PML treated with ART. We observed significant global cog-
 10 nitive impairment on neuropsychological tests in the patient infected with both HIV
 11 and JC virus and the severity was far greater than that observed in control patients
 12 infected with HIV but not PML, regardless of the degree of immunosuppression.
 13 Consistent with the pathophysiology of PML, the co infected individual exhibited
 14 significant white matter abnormalities on FLAIR imaging. However, the extent of
 15 white matter damage was best appreciated using DTI, which revealed abnormali-
 16 ties in multiple white matter regions that could not be identified readily using the
 17 FLAIR sequence.

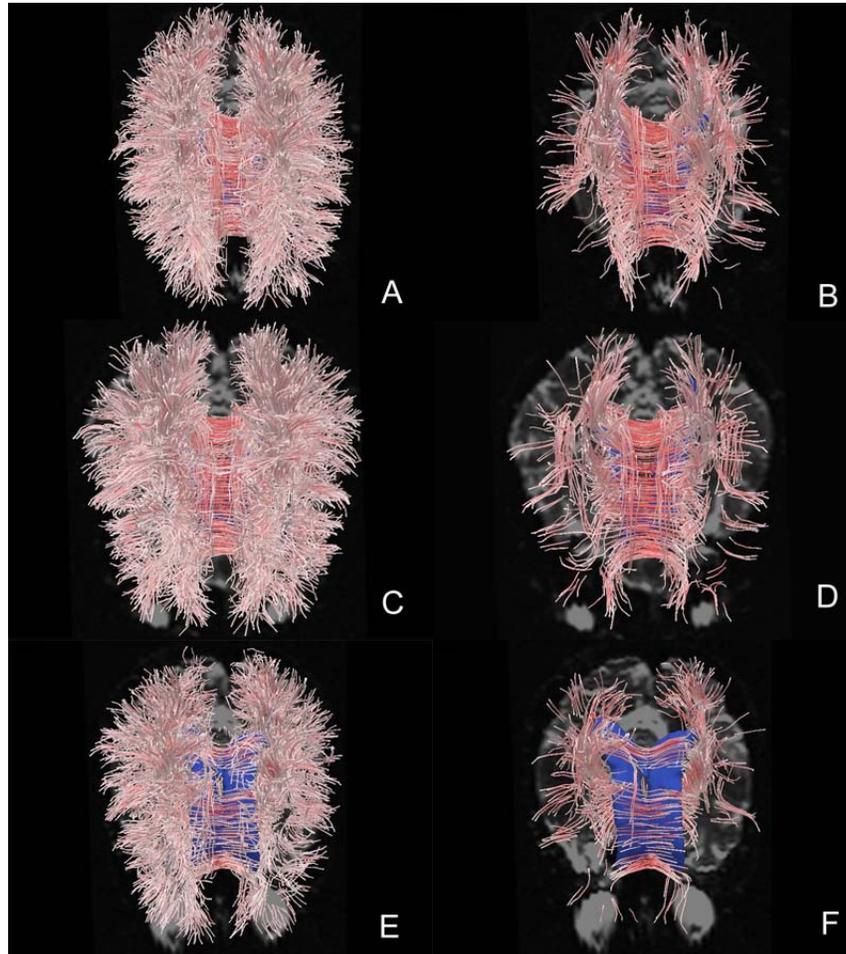


Fig. 2. Axial views of unthresholded and thresholded streamtube models for the immunologically healthy HIV patient (A and B, respectively), the immunocompromised patient (C and D), and the HIV patient with PML (E and F).

1 Historically, activation of the JC virus in the context of HIV offered little ther-
2 apeutic hope with mortality rates near 100%. ART has significantly increased life
3 expectancy associated with this condition [3], but the neurological outcome among
4 survivors has not been well defined. Previous case control studies have demonstrated
5 improvement in cognitive function and regression of white matter abnormalities visu-
6 alized on structural MRI among HIV/PML patients treated with ART [6, 7, 14]. We
7 did not have access to remote clinical and neuroimaging data to examine changes
8 across more than two time points following treatment in the patient, and this is a
9 limitation of our study as we cannot fully describe the development and progression
10 of his symptoms from disease onset. However, our data demonstrate that in the
11 context of ART, individuals with HIV/PML are likely to experience very significant
12 residual cognitive symptoms and evidence of white matter damage on MRI. These

1 findings are very similar to Gasnault *et al.* who reported increased survival follow-
ing HIV treatment (particularly with protease inhibitors) but no effective neurologic
3 improvement [9].

4 The degree of cognitive impairment exhibited by the HIV/PML patient com-
pared to healthy controls and the HIV control subjects was quite severe, and the
5 nature of the deficits remained consistent over the course of the year. The severity of
7 his cognitive difficulties likely impacts his ability to independently complete activi-
ties of daily living. We did not have information on memory function to document
9 a diagnosis of dementia. However, the observation that executive deficits are more
significant predictors of activities of daily living than memory deficits [5], argues
11 that this patient's cognitive deficits were of significant clinical importance. It is of
note that this individual became lost on multiple occasions driving to our site for
13 the assessments, and this may represent evidence of functional impairment.

14 The neurophysiology of cellular dysfunction associated with the JC virus is char-
acterized by apoptosis of oligodendrocytes. Richardson-Burns and colleagues [17]
15 have shown that neuronal cells and oligodendrocytes distant from regions of JC
viral presence at autopsy are not apoptotic, suggesting that the impact of the virus
17 on brain tissue is focal. We obviously do not have pathology data to confirm the
anatomical location of his virus within the brain. Given the sensitivity of DTI of
19 microstructural brain changes, future studies attempting to correlate antemortem
and postmortem findings would benefit from the application of DTI data. Use of
21 the weighted streamtube length metric described in the current study may help to
define whether neuronal diaschisis occurs among patients with active PML.
23

24 The novel DTI scalar metrics (number of paths, length of paths and weighted
length of paths) included in the current study revealed robust differences in white
25 matter integrity across the three HIV patients. These differences were evident in a
dose-dependent manner with the most severe white matter damage observed in the
27 HIV/PML patient, followed by the immunologically impaired patient and finally
the immunologically healthy patient. This pattern provides some support for the
29 validity of these novel metrics, however, additional studies will be needed to more
definitively determine the relative value of these metrics compared to standard DTI
31 variables such as regional FA and MD. These studies are currently underway by
members of our group (DL) using various patient groups as model systems.
33

34 In summary, PML associated with HIV has become less common in the era of
35 ART, and treatment with retroviral medications has been shown to improve clinical
indicators in previous case reports. Our results are based on a single case of PML
37 and therefore caution must be exercised in interpreting too much from the data.
Nevertheless, the findings indicate that for some patients with HIV and PML, severe
39 cognitive difficulties and neuroimaging abnormalities may remain despite treatment
with ART. Evidence that AIDS-related PML may arise from immune reconstitution
41 inflammatory syndrome in the current era of HAART [11] emphasizes the need
to further understand the functional impact of this condition. Further, as patients
43 experience increased life expectancy it will be important to direct clinical care on

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1 the impact of residual cognitive deficits on quality of life and ability to complete
basic activities of daily living (driving, medication adherence, etc.).

3 **4.1. Integrative significance**

To our knowledge, this is the first study to integrate quantitative DTI, structural
5 imaging and cognitive assessment to define white matter damage associated with
HIV and PML. This integrative approach provides a robust methodology to examine
7 the integrity of brain systems that mediate cognitive function, and this is particu-
larly true regarding PML, HIV, and other diseases affecting the white matter (e.g.,
9 subcortical ischemic disease, multiple sclerosis). The white matter accounts for sub-
stantial volume of overall brain parenchyma yet our understanding of the impact
11 of microstructural and macrostructural damage to the large and distributed neu-
ral networks within the white matter remains incomplete. Integration of cognitive,
13 structural imaging and quantified tractography will likely enhance our understand-
ing of these important brain systems beyond what is possible by any one of these
15 methodologies applied in isolation.

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