

Volumetrische Daten mesiotemporaler Strukturen als potenzielle Biomarker limbischer Enzephalitiden

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Abkürzungsverzeichnis

CA	Cornu Ammonis
CASPR2	Contactin-associated protein-like 2
EEG	Elektroenzephalographie
GAD	Glutamatdecarboxylase
GAD-LE	Limbische Enzephalitis mit Autoantikörpern gegen Glutamatdecarboxylase
HATA	Hippocampus-Amygdala-Transitionszone
LE	Limbische Enzephalitis
LGI1	Leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1
MPRAGE	Magnetization-prepared Rapid Acquisition Gradient Echo
MRT	Magnet Resonanz Tomographie
T	Tesla
VGKC	Voltage-gated potassium channel
VGKC-LE	Limbische Enzephalitis mit Autoantikörpern gegen den Voltage-gated potassium channel (VGKC)-Komplex

1. Deutsche Zusammenfassung

1.1 Einleitung

Die Limbische Enzephalitis (LE) ist ein autoimmun-inflammatorisches Syndrom, das durch eine subakute Störung des Arbeitsgedächtnisses oder psychiatrische Symptome wie Affektstörungen charakterisiert ist und häufig mit epileptischen Anfällen temporaler Semiologie einhergeht (Bien und Elger, 2007; Dalmau und Graus, 2018; Graus et al., 2016). Bei Patienten mit in der Adoleszenz erstmalig auftretenden Temporallappenanfällen stellen autoimmune Enzephalitiden, insbesondere bei schlechtem Ansprechen auf eine antikonvulsive Therapie, eine wichtige Differentialdiagnose dar (Elger et al., 2017).

Seit der Erstbeschreibung der Krankheitsentität, konnte eine Vielzahl verschiedener Autoantikörper mit dem Auftreten der LE assoziiert werden, was zu einer Einteilung verschiedener Formen der Erkrankung in serologisch definierte Gruppen geführt hat. Zu den häufigsten, mit der LE assoziierten Autoantikörpern zählen jene gegen das intrazelluläre Antigen *Glutamatdecarboxylase* (GAD) sowie gegen den extrazellulären *Voltage-gated potassium channel* (VGKC)-Komplex (Dubey et al., 2018; Malter et al., 2010). Innerhalb des VGKC-Komplexes konnten in jüngerer Vergangenheit zwei Subantigene identifiziert werden, die nach derzeitiger Auffassung Ziele zweier spezifischer Autoantikörper darstellen (Irani et al., 2010; Van Sonderen et al., 2016). Bei diesen Subantigenen handelt es sich um *Leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1* (LGI1) und *Contactin-associated protein-like 2* (CASPR2).

Die serologische Differenzierung der LE anhand der verschiedenen Autoantikörper scheint nicht nur aus neuropathologischer Sicht bedeutsam, sondern ist auch Ausdruck der in den letzten Jahren zunehmenden Evidenz, dass sich die Subgruppen auch in ihren Risikofaktoren, ihrer klinischen Manifestation, sowie dem Ansprechen auf eine immunmodulierende Therapie relevant voneinander unterscheiden (Binks et al., 2017; Malter et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2021; Thaler et al., 2020).

Dennoch stellt eine positive Serologie sowohl in den Leitlinien der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Neurologie als auch in den weitreichend akzeptierten Diagnosekriterien von Graus et al. (2016) kein obligates Diagnosekriterium der LE dar (Bien et al., 2012).

Dies ist insbesondere damit zu begründen, dass eine für spezifische Autoantikörper negative Serologie beziehungsweise Liquordiagnostik das Vorhandensein noch nicht charakterisierter Autoantikörper nicht ausschließt und seit Veröffentlichung der vorliegenden Studie bereits weitere möglicherweise mit der LE in Zusammenhang stehende Autoantikörper charakterisiert werden konnten (Pitsch et al., 2020).

Auf Grundlage dieser Erkenntnis, wird sowohl der differenzierten klinischen Betrachtung als auch der Magnetresonanztomographie (MRT) in der diagnostischen Aufarbeitung der Limbischen Enzephalitis eine immer bedeutsamere Rolle zuteil (Graus et al., 2016; Wagner et al., 2015b, 2016).

Obwohl sich die Evidenz für das Vorliegen Antikörper-spezifischer Veränderungen in der MRT insbesondere auf Gruppenebene in den letzten Jahren zunehmend verdichtet, ist nach wie vor eine unzureichende Korrelation zwischen den bildgebenden Veränderungen und dem klinischen Verlauf der jeweiligen Subgruppe der LE hergestellt und die Frage, ob die beobachteten Gruppenunterschiede auch auf den Einzelfall übertragbar sind und diagnostisch genutzt werden können, bleibt weitestgehend ungeklärt.

Ziel der vorliegenden Studie war es daher, mittels struktureller MRT-Daten die mesiotemporalen Veränderungen bei Patienten mit LE hinsichtlich (1) des Erkrankungsstadiums, (2) der hauptsächlich betroffenen Hemisphäre und (3) des zugrundeliegenden Autoantikörpers zu definieren und diese Daten in der Folge auf Einzelfallebene mittels überwachten maschinellen Lernens zur MRT-basierten Klassifizierung in die jeweilige Serogruppe nutzbar zu machen.

1.2 Material und Methoden

Insgesamt wurden 46 Patienten mit LE und Autoantikörpern gegen Glutamatdecarboxylase (GAD-LE) sowie 34 Patienten mit LE und Autoantikörpern gegen den VGKC-Komplex (VGKC-LE) in die Studie eingeschlossen. Obligate Kriterien zum Einschluss in das Studienkollektiv waren (1) Volljährigkeit, (2) die Diagnose eines limbischen Syndroms (mit dem Vorhandensein mindestens eines der folgenden Symptome: Anfälle temporaler Semiologie, Störungen des episodischen Gedächtnisses oder psychiatrische Symptome mit Affektstörungen), (3) serologisch nachgewiesene

Autoantikörper gegen den VGKC-Komplex (oder, falls vorhanden Aufschlüsselung in die Subantigene LGI1 beziehungsweise CASPR2) oder GAD, sowie (4) die Verfügbarkeit von mindestens einem 3D T1-gewichteten *magnetization-prepared rapid acquisition gradient echo* (MPRAGE) MRT-Datensatz. Sowohl die Gruppe der GAD-LE als auch die der VGKC-LE wurde entsprechend dem Zeitpunkt der Bildgebung im Krankheitsverlauf in eine frühe- und eine späte Gruppe unterteilt: Die frühen Gruppen beinhalteten T1-gewichtete MRT-Daten, die innerhalb der ersten 24 Monate nach dem Einsetzen der ersten Symptome akquiriert wurden. Die späten Gruppen beinhalteten den zuletzt akquirierten T1-gewichteten MRT-Datensatz des jeweiligen Patienten. 15 Patienten aus der GAD-Gruppe und 13 Patienten aus der VGKC-Gruppe konnten sowohl in die frühe- als auch in die späte Gruppe eingeschlossen werden, da sie sich wiederholt MR-tomographischen Untersuchungen unterzogen und die zeitlichen Einschlusskriterien beider Gruppen erfüllten. Jedem Patienten-Datensatz wurde ein hinsichtlich Geschlecht-, Alter zum Zeitpunkt der Datenakquise- und MRT-Sequenz übereinstimmender Kontrollproband zugeordnet.

Bei den in der Studie verwendeten MRT-Daten handelte es sich für jeden Scan-Zeitpunkt um eine T1-gewichtete MPRAGE - Sequenz mit den folgenden Parametern: Voxelgröße = $1.0 \times 1.0 \times 1.0 \text{ mm}^3$, Relaxationszeit = 1570ms, Echo-Zeit = 3.42ms, Flipwinkel = 15° , Matrix = 256×256 Pixel. Im Rahmen eines 2014 erfolgten Scanner-Updates kam es zu minimalen Änderungen der Akquisitionsparameter. Diese Tatsache wurde bei der Auswahl der Kontrollprobanden berücksichtigt (siehe Originalpublikation). Alle für die Studie verwendeten MRT-Daten wurden am 3 Tesla (T) *Magnetom Trio* Magnetresonanztomographen (Siemens, Erlangen, Germany) im *Life&Brain* Forschungszentrum des Universitätsklinikums Bonn erhoben.

Zur volumetrischen Analyse des Hippocampus, der hippocampalen Subfelder, der Amygdala und des intrakraniellen Volumens wurde die Software *FreeSurfer*, Version 6.0.0 (<http://surfer.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu>) genutzt (Fischl et al., 2004, 2002). Mit Hilfe dieses etablierten Softwarepakets wurde der Hippocampus nach Vorverarbeitung der nativen Volumina in folgende Regionen parzelliert: Cornu Ammonis (CA) 1, 2/3 und 4, Fimbria, Hippocampuschwanz, Hippocampus-Amygdala-Transitionszone (HATA), Stratum granulare und Stratum moleculare des Gyrus dentatus, Presubiculum, Parasubiculum,

Subiculum und Hippocampale Fissur (Iglesias et al., 2015). Ferner wurde eine Maske für die Amygdala sowie das Ganzhirnvolumen generiert. Um eine einheitliche Qualität der computerisierten Parzellierung zu gewährleisten, wurden alle Masken vor Extraktion der Volumenwerte von zwei unabhängigen Ratern visuell auf ihre korrekte Position im anatomischen Raum (native T1) überprüft. Darüber hinaus wurden alle ausgelesenen Volumenwerte für das gesamte Hirnvolumen abzüglich des Ventrikelvolumens korrigiert, um den Einfluss von Normvarianten bei der Größe des Ganzhirnvolumens auf die Ergebnisse der Volumetrie zu minimieren.

Die Unterschiede in den Volumina der hippocampalen Subfelder zwischen den Patienten- und Kontrollgruppen wurden z-transformiert, farbkodiert und in einem 3D-Modell des Hippocampus visualisiert (siehe Abbildung 4 Originalpublikation).

Im Zuge der Analyse der volumetrischen Daten von Amygdala, Hippocampus und hippocampaler Subfelder, wurden alle Volumina entsprechend der Lateralisierung pathologischer Veränderungen in der Elektroenzephalographie (EEG) in Volumina der *betroffenen-* beziehungsweise *unbetroffenen* Hemisphäre regroupiert, mit dem Ziel, potenziell stärkere Veränderungen der mesiotemporalen Strukturen auf der elektroenzephalographisch stärker betroffenen Hemisphäre zu demaskieren. Zur Verhinderung eines Links-Rechts-Bias wurde die jeweilige Kontrolle des entsprechenden Patienten-Scans in gleicher Weise reorientiert.

Zur statistischen Auswertung der Daten wurde das Programm *STATA 2015*, Stata Statistical Software, Release 14 (StataCorp, College Station, Texas) verwendet. Die volumetrischen Daten von Amygdala und Hippocampus wurden mittels ungepaarten, zweiseitigen *t* Tests verglichen. Der Gruppeneffekt hinsichtlich der Volumina der hippocampalen Subfelder wurde im Rahmen eines multivariaten linearen Modells getestet. Nachfolgend wurde im Sinne der post-hoc Testung *Fishers least-significant difference* (Test auf kleinsten signifikanten Unterschied) bemüht (Milliken und Johnson, 2009). Testergebnisse wurden im Falle eines $p < 0,05$ als statistisch signifikant erachtet. Zur Visualisierung der Ergebnisse wurde *Matlab's Statistics Toolbox* (Release 2012b; MathWorks, Natick, Massachusetts) verwendet.

Mit dem Ziel zu evaluieren, inwiefern sich die Volumenunterschiede zwischen den Gruppen in den verschiedenen Erkrankungsphasen diagnostisch nutzbar machen ließen, wurde im weiteren Verlauf mit Hilfe der Software *Scikit-Learn* (<https://scikit->

learn.org/stable/index.html) ein binärer *Decision Tree Classifier* (Entscheidungsbaum) konstruiert.

Decision Tree Learning ist ein Ansatz der prädiktiven Modellierung, der basierend auf einem Entscheidungsbaum von einer Beobachtung über eine Größe (im Falle der vorliegenden Studie die Volumina der mesiotemporalen Strukturen, repräsentiert durch die Verzweigungen des Entscheidungsbaums) Schlussfolgerungen auf eine Zielvariable (im Falle der vorliegenden Studie die Serogruppe, repräsentiert durch die Blätter des Entscheidungsbaums) zulässt. In Abhängigkeit des Merkmals der Zielvariablen unterscheidet man *classification trees*, bei denen die Zielvariable diskrete Werte annehmen kann von *regression trees*, bei denen die Zielvariable eine stetige Variable darstellt (Quinlan, 1986; Wu et al., 2008). Diese Anwendung maschinellen Lernens, sollte der Differenzierung der frühen Patientengruppen auf Basis der volumetrischen Daten der betroffenen Hemisphäre dienen. Die Testung erfolgte nur für die frühen Patientengruppen, da wir in der akuten Phase der Erkrankung die größte Trennschärfe hinsichtlich struktureller Veränderungen der mesiotemporalen Strukturen erwarteten. Weitere methodische Details zum *Decision Tree Classifier* können der Originalpublikation entnommen werden.

1.3 Ergebnisse

Im Vergleich zum Kontrollkollektiv zeigte sich die Amygdala sowohl in der frühen- als auch in der späten GAD-Gruppe signifikant volumenvermehrt ($p = 0,03$), wohingegen das Amygdala-Volumen im VGKC-Kollektiv nur in der frühen Gruppe signifikant höher war ($p = 0,004$). Das Gesamtvolumen des Hippocampus zeigte in keiner der Gruppen im Vergleich zum Kontrollkollektiv signifikante Volumenunterschiede (siehe Abbildung 1 der Originalpublikation).

Hinsichtlich der volumetrischen Daten der hippocampalen Subfelder ergaben sich statistisch signifikante Gruppenunterschiede für die Werte der betroffenen Hemisphäre beider GAD-Gruppen und der frühen VGKC-Gruppe im Vergleich mit ihrem jeweiligen Kontrollkollektiv ($p < 0,02$), was jedoch nicht für die späte VGKC-Gruppe galt ($p = 0,12$). Die größten Gruppenunterschiede ergaben sich für die frühen Patientengruppen: In der

frühen GAD-Gruppe war das Volumen von CA1, von HATA und das Volumen des Parasubiculums auf der betroffenen Hemisphäre verglichen mit dem Kontrollkollektiv signifikant vergrößert (alle $p < 0,04$). In der frühen VGKC-Gruppe galt dies lediglich für HATA und das Parasubiculum (alle $p < 0,01$; siehe Abbildung 2 der Originalpublikation sowie Tabellen S3–8). Da bei zehn Patienten aus der frühen VGKC-Gruppe Autoantikörper gegen LGI1 nachgewiesen werden konnten, erfolgte für diese Subgruppe, sowie für die übrigen Patienten in dieser Gruppe ein jeweils eigener Vergleich mit den passenden Kontrollen. Auch hier konnten signifikante Volumenunterschiede zwischen den Gruppen festgestellt werden ($p < 0,01$; siehe Abbildung 3 der Originalpublikation). In der im Abschnitt Material und Methoden beschriebenen 3D-Visualisierung konnten die Gruppenunterschiede in den Volumina der Subfelder anatomisch exakt abgebildet werden. Gemeinsam mit der schematischen Darstellung der z-Werte als Funktion der approximativen anatomischen Distanz des jeweiligen hippocampalen Subfeldes zur Amygdala ergab sich ausschließlich im Falle der frühen GAD-Gruppe ein anterior- zu posterior entlang der hippocampalen Achse verlaufender Gradient mit stark volumenvermehrten Subfeldern im anterioren Teil des Hippocampus, verglichen mit dem posterioren Teil (siehe Abbildung 4 der Originalpublikation).

Mit Hilfe des *Decision Tree Classifiers* konnte ausschließlich auf Basis der volumetrischen Daten mit einer Spezifität von 87 % und einer Sensitivität von 80 % zwischen den LGI1-Patienten aus der frühen VGKC-Gruppe und den Patienten der frühen GAD-Gruppe differenziert werden (siehe Abbildung 3A und B der Originalpublikation). Permutationstests bestätigten in der Folge die Annahme, dass es sich bei den Ergebnissen des *Decision Tree Classifiers* um signifikante Ergebnisse oberhalb des Zufallsniveaus handelte ($p = 0,002$). Eine post-hoc Analyse der innerhalb des Entscheidungsbaumes ausschlaggebenden *features* zeigte, dass das Volumen der Fimbria (Gini = 0,49) gefolgt von CA1 (Gini = 0,27), dem Presubiculum (Gini = 0,13), und dem Hippocampuschwanz (Gini = 0,11) die größte Relevanz für die Klassifizierung hatte. Beim Versuch in gleicher Weise zwischen früher GAD-Gruppe und der gesamten frühen VGKC-Gruppe zu differenzieren, konnte lediglich eine Spezifität von 59 % sowie eine Sensitivität von 61 % erreicht werden. Ferner konnte mittels Permutationstestung kein Klassifikationsergebnis oberhalb des Zufallsniveaus belegt werden ($p = 0,16$).

1.4 Diskussion

Die vorliegende Studie liefert für das untersuchte Kollektiv vier zentrale Ergebnisse, die einen Einblick in die Schädigungsmuster der mesiotemporalen Strukturen im Krankheitsverlauf der LE bieten: Die Veränderungen der Amygdalae, Hippocampi sowie der hippocampalen Subfelder im Rahmen der Antikörper-vermittelten LE sind in frühen Erkrankungsstadien am stärksten ausgeprägt (stadienspezifisch), betreffen insbesondere die elektroenzephalographisch auffällige Hemisphäre (seitenspezifisch) und unterscheiden sich in Abhängigkeit des zugrundeliegenden Autoantikörpers (antikörperspezifisch).

Ferner stellt der auf Basis der volumetrischen Daten konstruierte *Decision Tree Classifier* den zum Zeitpunkt der Veröffentlichung der Originalpublikation ersten publizierten Versuch einer automatisierten Differenzierung verschiedener Serogruppen der LE auf Basis volumetrischer Daten dar (Klassifizierung).

Eine zentrale Schwierigkeit bei der Datenanalyse des vorliegenden, hauptsächlich retrospektiv im Rahmen der klinischen Routine akquirierten Patientenkollektivs stellte die an das individuelle Krankheitsgeschehen des betroffenen Patienten angepasste therapeutische Intervention dar. Folglich waren die meisten Patienten der frühen Gruppen bei Akquise der MRT-Daten noch therapienaiv, was selbstverständlich nicht für die späten Gruppen galt (siehe Tabelle 1 der Originalpublikation).

Es stellt sich somit insbesondere im Falle der späten Patientengruppen die Frage, welche Gruppenunterschiede direkte Folge der Immuntherapie sind und welche Veränderungen unabhängig davon betrachtet werden sollten.

Diese Limitation ist in den therapienaiven frühen Gruppen, deren volumetrische Daten im weiteren Verlauf der Studie auch zur Konstruktion des *Decision Tree Classifiers* verwendet wurden, jedoch zu vernachlässigen.

In der initial durchgeführten Analyse des Gesamtvolumens von Hippocampus und Amygdala war bereits auffällig, dass sich die signifikanten volumetrischen Gruppenunterschiede insbesondere in den frühen Patientengruppen zeigten und dort lediglich bei den Amygdala-Volumina, wohingegen sich das Gesamtvolumen des

Hippocampus nicht signifikant zwischen Patienten- und Kontrollgruppen unterschied (siehe Abbildung 1 in der Originalpublikation).

Diese Beobachtung deckt sich nicht nur mit den Ergebnissen vorangegangener MRT-Studien zur LE, sondern bekräftigt auch die Vermutung einer Stadienabhängigkeit der strukturellen Veränderungen bei dieser Erkrankung (Wagner et al., 2015b).

Die Tatsache, dass sich in den im weiteren Verlauf der Studie durchgeführten volumetrischen Analysen der hippocampalen Subfelder signifikante Volumenunterschiede zwischen den Vergleichsgruppen (bei nicht-signifikant verändertem hippocampalen Gesamtvolumen) zeigten, bestärkt zudem auch die Hypothese, dass die Vulnerabilität des Hippocampus beziehungsweise das Ausmaß der strukturellen Schädigung innerhalb des Hippocampus bei der LE durchaus regional unterschiedlich ist. Demzufolge ist eine Betrachtung des hippocampalen Gesamtvolumens für die Beantwortung der Frage, ob eine hippocampale Schädigung vorliegt oder nicht, als unzureichend zu bewerten.

Der Erkenntnis eines erheblichen Zugewinns an Information durch eine hohe räumliche Auflösung sowie die Entwicklung neuer Methoden zur Subsegmentierung relevanter Hirnstrukturen trägt eine immer größer werdende Zahl an morphometrischen MRT-Studien mit Einsatz von hohen Magnetfeldstärken (7T – MRT) und speziellem *Postprocessing* der bildgebenden Daten (Analyse der kortikalen Dicke, Segmentierung der Amygdala-Nuclei, Diffusions-Tensor-Bildgebung) Rechnung (Bauer et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020; Saygin et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

In vorausgegangenen Studien zu den bildgebenden Charakteristika bei LE konnte eine beide Amygdalae betreffende Schwellung nachgewiesen werden (Wagner et al., 2015a). Da die konventionelle neuroradiologische Befundung der nativen MRT-Volumina der eingeschlossenen Patienten jedoch vornehmlich unilaterale Signalveränderung im mesialen Temporallappen ergab (siehe Tabelle 1 der Originalpublikation), wurden in der vorliegenden Studie erstmalig volumetrische Daten in Abhängigkeit der Lateralisierung in der EEG reorientiert und auf Gruppenebene analysiert, wobei betont werden muss, dass ein unauffälliger kontralateraler EEG-Befund eine Affektion der kontralateralen Hemisphäre keineswegs ausschließt.

Nach Reorientierung der Bilder konnte lediglich in der Amygdala der betroffenen Hemisphäre ein signifikanter Volumenunterschied zwischen Patienten und Kontrollen gezeigt werden (siehe Abbildung 1 der Originalpublikation), was zumindest in der Initialphase der LE, für einen unihemisphärischen Erkrankungsprozess sprechen könnte. Auch Navarro et al. (2016) formulieren ein ähnliches pathomechanistisches Verständnis hinsichtlich der Lateralisierung des Erkrankungsprozesses bei LE, so gehen sie im Falle der LGI1-LE davon aus, dass sich die Erkrankung zunächst unihemisphärisch manifestiert und vor Beginn- beziehungsweise beim Ausbleiben einer immunmodulatorischen Therapie auf die kontralaterale Hemisphäre übergreift. Auch in der vorliegenden Studie zeigte sich eine ausgeprägtere Asymmetrie in der frühen Phase der Erkrankung (siehe Abbildung 1A und Abbildung 2 der Originalpublikation).

Diskutabel bleibt zudem, ob die vorbeschriebene biamygdaläre Schwellung lediglich ein Effekt des Einschlusses von sowohl links- als auch rechtshemisphärisch betroffenen Patienten darstellt, oder bereits das Stadium der kontralateralen Progression abbildet. Unabhängig davon sollte jedoch kritisch hinterfragt werden, ob bilaterale Veränderungen in der konventionellen MRT als belastbares diagnostisches Kriterium der LE gewertet werden können (Graus et al., 2016).

Wie bereits erwähnt herrscht wissenschaftlicher Konsens darüber, dass das klinische Bild der LE in Abhängigkeit des zugrundeliegenden Autoantikörpers stark variiert (Malter et al., 2010; Navarro et al., 2016). Eine mögliche Erklärung für die Heterogenität des klinischen Bildes stellen sowohl eine regional innerhalb des Hippocampus variierende Vulnerabilität der Neurone auf schädigende Einflüsse- als auch die in neueren Studien gezeigte variable Pathogenität antineuronaler Antikörper dar (Bartsch und Wulff, 2015; Ramberger et al., 2020).

Eine Region, die im Rahmen eines inflammatorischen Geschehens innerhalb des ZNS besonders vulnerabel zu sein scheint, ist die CA1-Region des Hippocampus (Bartsch et al., 2015). Auch in der vorliegenden Studie ließen sich signifikant größere Volumina der CA1-Region und HATA auf der elektroenzephalographisch betroffenen Hemisphäre bei den Patienten der frühen GAD-Gruppe verglichen mit gesunden Kontrollen beobachten wohingegen sich die CA1-Region im Gruppenvergleich der frühen VGKC-Gruppe mit

gesunden Kontrollen nicht signifikant vom Kontrollkollektiv unterschied (siehe Abbildung 2 der Originalpublikation).

Die Neurone innerhalb der CA1-Region scheinen insbesondere vulnerabel für oxidativen Stress zu sein und die in der frühen Phase der GAD-LE beobachtete Volumenvermehrung innerhalb dieser Region stellt möglicherweise das MR-morphologische Korrelat eines zytotoxischen Ödems durch den schädigenden Einfluss der GAD-Autoantikörper dar.

Aus funktionellen Gesichtspunkten scheint die CA1-Region des Hippocampus eine bedeutsame Rolle beim Abruf autobiographischer Gedächtnisinhalte, mentaler Zeitreise und der Konstitution des autonomen Bewusstseins zu spielen (Bartsch et al., 2011).

Die Tatsache, dass insbesondere Patienten mit GAD-LE in diesem Funktionsbereich Defizite aufweisen, bekräftigt die Schlussfolgerung, dass es sich bei den beobachteten Veränderungen der CA1-Region um das strukturelle Korrelat dieser kognitiven Funktionsstörung handeln könnte (Witt et al., 2015).

Die besondere Rolle der CA1-Region bei der LE aber auch im Rahmen anderer autoimmun-inflammatorischer ZNS-Erkrankungen bleibt von großem Interesse und ist Gegenstand aktueller Studien (Heine et al., 2020).

Bei Betrachtung der 3D Visualisierung regionaler Gruppenunterschiede innerhalb des Hippocampus fiel insbesondere in der frühen GAD-Gruppe ein anterior-zu-posterior Gradient mit besonders stark volumenvermehrten Subregionen im anterioren Bereich und weniger stark volumenvermehrten Subregionen im posterioren Bereich des Hippocampus auf. In der späten GAD-Gruppe ließ sich ein derartiger Gradient nicht erkennen, sondern eine globale strukturelle Veränderung war apparent (siehe Abbildung 4 der Originalpublikation). Neuere Studien zur Struktur-Funktionsbeziehung im gesunden menschlichen Hippocampus liefern Hinweise auf einen funktionellen Gradienten von anterior-zu-posterior entlang der hippocampalen Längsachse. Die Autoren konnten zeigen, dass die anterioren Bereiche des Hippocampus insbesondere für die Gedächtnisleistung und hier insbesondere für den Abruf emotionsbehafteter Gedächtnisinhalte von Relevanz sind (Vos de Wael et al., 2018).

Diese Beobachtungen lassen die vorsichtige Vermutung zu, dass es bei Patienten mit GAD-LE durch die strukturelle Schädigung möglicherweise zu einer Störung dieses

funktionellen Gradienten mit konsekutiver Einschränkung entsprechender Gedächtnisleistungen kommt.

Die beobachteten strukturellen Veränderungen innerhalb der hippocampalen Subfelder inspirieren die Vorstellung eines Autoantikörper-spezifischen Schädigungsmusters im Sinne eines *hippocampalen Fingerabdrucks* der LE und damit das Bestreben, dieses Muster mittels maschinellen Lernens auf Einzelfallebene zu detektieren und somit diagnostisch nutzbar zu machen. Eine ad hoc durchgeführte umfangreiche Literaturrecherche ergab, dass wir in der vorliegenden Studie den erstmaligen Versuch einer computerisierten Klassifikation zwischen verschiedenen Serogruppen der LE auf Basis prozessierter MRT-Daten unternahmen.

Auch wenn eine automatisierte Differenzierung in der vorliegenden Studie lediglich zwischen den Patienten der frühen LGI1- und GAD-Subgruppen erfolgreich war und der *Decision Tree Classifier* zum aktuellen Zeitpunkt noch keinen diagnostischen Mehrwert liefern kann, ist zu hoffen, dass sich zukünftige Studien zur LE mit größeren Patientenkollektiven in die fächerübergreifend rasant wachsende Zahl an MRT-Studien einreihen, die sich mit der Idee einer automatisierten Klassifizierung klinischer Subgruppen basierend auf Algorithmen des maschinellen Lernens befassen (Jia et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2019).

1.5 Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Studie liefert neue Erkenntnisse über Schädigungsmuster mesiotemporaler Strukturen bei LE in Abhängigkeit der Erkrankungsphase und des zugrundeliegenden Autoantikörpers. Im untersuchten Kollektiv scheinen diese strukturellen Veränderungen stadienspezifisch, seitenspezifisch und antikörperspezifisch zu sein. Zudem beinhaltet die Studie den Versuch einer auf den volumetrischen MRT-Daten basierenden automatisierten Klassifikation der Patientengruppen mittels eines *Decision-Tree-Classifiers*. Um die diagnostische Wertigkeit und die funktionelle Relevanz der beobachteten Veränderungen genauer beurteilen zu können, sind weiterführende interdisziplinäre Studien mit größeren Patientenkollektiven sowie die Hinzunahme weiterer Serogruppen der LE notwendig.

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2. Veröffentlichung

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH
ADULT BRAIN

Volumetry of Mesiotemporal Structures Reflects Serostatus in Patients with Limbic Encephalitis

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: Limbic encephalitis is an autoimmune disease. A variety of autoantibodies have been associated with different subtypes of limbic encephalitis, whereas its MR imaging signature is uniformly characterized by mesiotemporal abnormalities across subtypes. Here, we hypothesized that patients with limbic encephalitis would show subtype-specific mesiotemporal structural correlates, which could be classified by supervised machine learning on an individual level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: TIWI MPRAGE scans from 46 patients with antibodies against glutamic acid decarboxylase and 34 patients with antibodies against the voltage-gated potassium channel complex (including 10 patients with leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1 autoantibodies) and 48 healthy controls were retrospectively ascertained. Parcellation of the amygdala, hippocampus, and hippocampal subfields was performed using FreeSurfer. Volumes were extracted and compared between groups using unpaired, 2-tailed *t* tests. The volumes of hippocampal subfields were analyzed using a multivariate linear model and a binary decision tree classifier.

RESULTS: Temporomesial volume alterations were most pronounced in an early stage and in the affected hemispheric side of patients. Statistical analysis revealed antibody-specific hippocampal fingerprints with a higher volume of CA1 in patients with glutamic acid decarboxylase-associated limbic encephalitis ($P = .02$), compared with controls, whereas CA1 did not differ from that in controls in patients with voltage-gated potassium channel complex autoantibodies. The classifier could successfully distinguish between patients with autoantibodies against leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1 and glutamic acid decarboxylase with a specificity of 87% and a sensitivity of 80%.

CONCLUSIONS: Our results suggest stage-, side- and antibody-specific structural correlates of limbic encephalitis; thus, they create a perspective toward an MR imaging-based diagnosis.

ABBREVIATIONS: CASPR2 = contactin-associated proteinlike 2; EEG = electroencephalogram; GAD = glutamic acid decarboxylase; GAD-LE = limbic encephalitis with glutamic acid decarboxylase-associated autoantibodies; LE = limbic encephalitis; LGI1 = leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1; VGKC = voltage-gated potassium channel complex; VGKC-LE = limbic encephalitis with voltage-gated potassium channel complex-associated autoantibodies

Limbic encephalitis (LE) is an autoimmune disease defined by subacute short-term memory loss and psychiatric

abnormalities often involving temporal lobe epilepsy.^{1–3} Several autoantibodies have been associated with different subtypes of LE, sharing clinical core features like the limbic syndrome, and may be discriminated by other characteristics such as comorbidities and response to immunotherapy.^{4,5} Autoantibodies against the voltage-gated potassium channel complex (VGKC) and glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD) are commonly found in patients with LE with temporal lobe epilepsy.⁶ Whereas patients with LE with autoantibodies against GAD and VGKC (GAD-LE and VGKC-LE) all display an early and prominent development of

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epileptic seizures, those with VGKC-LE are more responsive to immunotherapy. Recently, 2 antigenic components of the VGKC complex that are targeted by different autoantibodies have been identified: the leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1 (LGII) and contactin-associated proteinlike 2 (CASPR2).^{7,8} However, 12%–33% of those with VGKC-LE are negative for both of these subantigens.^{8,9} Furthermore, the detection of specific autoantibodies may not exclude the presence of other pathologic neuronal autoantibodies yet undiscovered. Therefore, it has been suggested that the diagnosis of LE should rely less on autoantibodies and more on clinical examinations and MR imaging.^{3,10}

MR imaging is especially relevant when the results of antibody testing are not yet available, and follow-up scans may be helpful for assessing the response to therapy. However, MR imaging findings correlate imperfectly with the course of disease, and antibody-specific MR imaging signatures have not yet been found on an individual level, though antibody-specific imaging features of LE are increasingly recognized on a group level.^{11–14} Thus, neuroimaging research in patients with LE may not only increase our pathophysiologic understanding of this disease but also help to define imaging biomarkers needed on clinical grounds. By harnessing modern techniques for hippocampal subfield segmentation, we sought to bridge the gap between clinical and radiologic findings. Here, we hypothesized that patients with LE would show stage-specific, side-specific, and antibody-specific mesiotemporal structure correlates, which could be classified by supervised machine learning on an individual level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects

We retrospectively ascertained clinical and MR imaging data from patients with LE who were treated the Department of Epileptology at University of Bonn Medical Center between April 2006 and June 2017 and met the following inclusion criteria: 1) 18 years of age or older, 2) having a diagnosis of a limbic syndrome (with at least 1 of the following symptoms: temporal lobe seizures, episodic memory disturbance, or psychiatric symptoms with affective disturbance), 3) serologically proved autoantibodies against the VGKC complex (or, if tests were available, against its antigenic components LGII or CASPR2) or GAD, and 4) availability of at least one 3D T1-weighted MPRAGE MR imaging scan. Bilateral mesiotemporal T2-FLAIR hyperintensities in routine clinical imaging³ were not considered an inclusion criterion, to avoid a selection bias of image analysis. Forty-six patients with GAD-LE and 34 patients with VGKC-LE were included in the study (80 patients in total, 36 men). Both GAD-LE and VGKC-LE groups were divided into 2 subgroups, respectively, depending on the time point of the MR imaging acquisition: The early group included T1WI scans acquired <24 months after the onset of the first LE-related symptom and is referred to as the early GAD group (23 patients in total, 7 men; age at MR imaging, 34.2 ± 11.2 years) or early VGKC group (25 patients in total, 16 men; age at MR imaging, 59.5 ± 15.2 years). The late group included the most recent available T1WI scans acquired at least 24 months after the onset of epilepsy and is referred to as late GAD group (33 patients in total, 10 men; age at MR imaging, 33.9 ± 12.3 years) or late VGKC group (22 patients in total, 10 men; age at

MR imaging, 57.0 ± 16.8 years).¹⁵ Ten patients from the GAD group and 13 patients from the VGKC group were included in both the early and the late groups because they were scanned repeatedly less than and more than 24 months after the onset of the first LE-related symptom.

Control subjects with no history of psychiatric or neurologic disorders were ascertained and individually matched with regard to sex, age at MR imaging, and MR imaging sequence (see “Image Acquisition”). This process resulted in a total of 4 control groups for the 4 patient groups: an early GAD group, late GAD group, early VGKC group, and late VGKC group (for a summary of patient and controls groups see Table 1; for details, see supporting information in On-line Tables 1 and 2). The study was approved by the local institutional review board, and all participants had provided written informed consent (as part of previous studies).

Antibody Testing

After 2014, screening for onconeurological antibodies was performed using semiquantitative immunoblots coated with recombinant antigen or antigen fragments.

Before 2014, detection of GAD antibodies as well as of VGKC complex antibodies in serum was performed using a radioimmuno-precipitation assay. Antibodies against LGII and CASPR2 were detected by indirect immunofluorescence. These tests were not performed before 2010; thus, 13 patients in the early VGKC group and 14 patients in the late VGKC group have not been tested for CASPR2 or LGII (for details, see supporting information in On-line Appendix).

Treatment

Immunotherapy was conducted according to guidelines set forth by the German Society for Neurology and expert opinion. It included first-line steroids, plasma exchange, and intravenous immunoglobulins, as well as second-line azathioprine, mycophenolate mofetil, rituximab, basiliximab, and cyclophosphamide.^{2,16,17} Immunotherapy was administered in addition to antiepileptic medication (for a summary see Table 1; for details, see the supporting information in On-line Tables 1 and 2).

Image Acquisition

Imaging data were acquired on a 3T Magnetom Trio scanner (Siemens, Erlangen, Germany) using an 8-channel receive head coil. For each scan time point, we acquired a T1WI MPRAGE sequence with the following parameters: voxel size = 1.0 × 1.0 × 1.0 mm³, TR = 1570 ms, TE = 3.42 ms, flip angle = 15°, matrix = 256 × 256 pixel. Due to a scanner update at the beginning of 2014, T1WI scans after this time point were acquired using a 32-channel head coil and the following parameters: voxel size = 0.8 × 0.8 × 0.8 mm³, TR = 1660 ms, TE = 2.54 ms, flip angle = 9°, matrix = 320 × 320 pixel. All control groups were matched with regard to sequence (see above).

Image Analysis

Volumetric analysis of the hippocampus, hippocampal subfields, amygdala, and intracranial volume was performed using the FreeSurfer, Version 6.0.0 image analysis suite (<http://surfer.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu>).^{18,19} The hippocampal substructures segmented by FreeSurfer, Version 6.0.0, included the following:

Table 1: Demographic and clinical characteristics of subgroups of patients with limbic encephalitis and their corresponding control groups

	GAD-LE	VGKC-LE	GAD-CON	VGKC-CON
Early group				
No. (men)	23 (7)	25 (16)	23 (7)	25 (16)
Age at MR imaging (mean) (yr)	34.2 ± 11.2	59.5 ± 15.2	35.4 ± 10.6	57.2 ± 13.2
Time between onset ^a and scan (mean) (mo)	9.5 ± 7.4	7.6 ± 6.1	NA	NA
Interictal EEG lateralization (n = right/left/bilateral/unclear)	5/12/1/5	7/8/2/8	NA	NA
No. of bilateral mesiotemporal FLAIR-T2-hyperintensities	2	5	NA	NA
No. of first-line immunotherapies	3	9	NA	NA
No. of second-line immunotherapies	0	1	NA	NA
Late group				
No. (men) ^b	33 (10)	22 (10)	33 (10)	22 (10)
Age at MR imaging (mean) (yr)	33.9 ± 12.3	57.0 ± 16.8	34.4 ± 11.9	53.2 ± 13.2
Time between onset ^a and scan (mean) (mo)	62.5 ± 26.2	61.5 ± 23.6	NA	NA
Interictal EEG lateralization (n = right/left/bilateral/unclear)	5/11/3/12	4/8/1/9	NA	NA
No. of bilateral mesiotemporal FLAIR-T2-hyperintensities	4	3	NA	NA
No. of first-line immunotherapies	14	18	NA	NA
No. of second-line immunotherapies	6	4	NA	NA

Note:—NA indicates not applicable; CON, matched healthy control group.

^a Onset of the first limbic encephalitis–related symptom.

^b Patients scanned repeatedly were included in both (early and late) study groups (repeat scans GAD-LE: n = 10; repeat scans VGKC-LE, n = 13).

CA1, CA2/3, CA4, fimbria, hippocampal tail, the hippocampus-amygdala transition area, granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus, presubiculum, parasubiculum, subiculum, molecular layer, and hippocampal fissure. The volume of the hippocampal fissure does not contribute to computation of the whole hippocampal volume and was deliberately excluded from the analysis.²⁰ Parcellation results were visually checked for accuracy and alignment by 2 independent raters (L.E. and I.D.-N.), supervised by an experienced neuroradiologist (E.H.). In case of inexact alignment, FreeSurfer parcellation was repeated with adjusted parameters. If parcellation results were again rated unsatisfactory by 1 or 2 raters, the subject was excluded. This procedure led to the exclusion of 1 subject from the VGKC group. All analyzed volumes were adjusted by the intracranial volume minus the ventricular volume. Patient-control differences in the hippocampal subfield volume were Z-transformed, color-coded, and visualized in a 3D model of a representative subject.

Reorientation of Images

For analysis, volumes of the amygdala, hippocampus, and hippocampal subfields were regrouped according to the lateralization in the interictal electroencephalogram (EEG), thus, allowing differential analyses of the affected and unaffected hemispheres to estimate the lateralization of pathologic structural alterations. To control for the effect of a left-right bias, we also regrouped an equal number of controls. If a clear focus could not be determined in the EEG or if a bilateral pathologic pattern was observed, we used the mean values from both hemispheres for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using STATA 2015, Stata Statistical Software, Release 14 (StataCorp, College Station, Texas). The volumetric data of the amygdala and the entire hippocampus were compared between groups using unpaired, 2-tailed *t* tests. The joint effect of group on all hippocampal

subfields was tested by means of a multivariate linear model. Subsequently, post hoc tests were conducted, which were protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.²¹ Test results were considered statistically significant if $P < .05$. Visualization of analyses results was with Matlab's Statistics Toolbox (Release 2012b; MathWorks, Natick, Massachusetts).

Supervised Machine Learning Classification

We set up a binary decision tree classifier using the Scikit-Learn toolkit²² to distinguish early LE groups on the basis of the volumetry of the hippocampal subfields on the affected side. To prevent age-related brain atrophy (especially in patients with LGI1) from influencing classification results, we corrected all volumetry data for the intracranial volume of the respective subject. Only early LE groups were tested because structural between-group differences may be thought to be most clear-cut at a pretherapeutic stage when potential future clinical applications are most needed. Decision trees are a type of non-parametric supervised statistical learning method.²³ The generalizability of our decision tree was assessed using a leave-one-out cross-validation scheme. Hyperparameter tuning was performed using an exhaustive grid search over the best-split criteria, maximum tree depth, minimum number of samples required to split an internal node, minimum number of samples at a leaf node, and the maximum number of features considered at every split. The F1 score was used as an optimization metric. However, default parameters set by Scikit-Learn yielded the best estimator for our problem (please refer to Scikit-Learn API [<https://keras.io/scikit-learn-api/>] for a full-parameter description and default values). To statistically compare the accuracy of our classifier against chance level, we tested its performance against null distributions by randomly shuffling the group labels in our dataset. In this way, 100,000 unique permutations were tested. The Gini importance of classification features was assessed post hoc on the basis of the model fit.

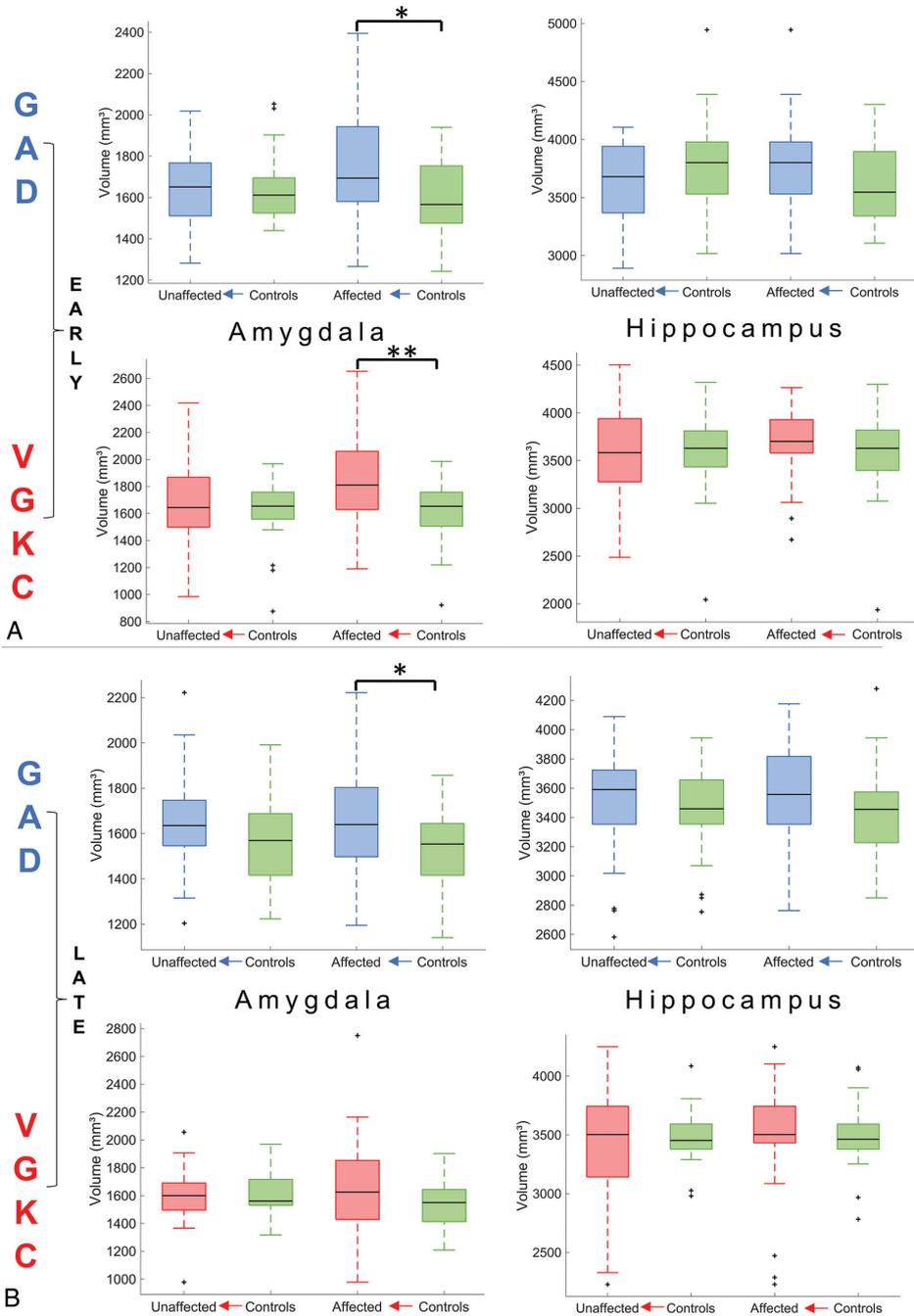


FIG 1. Volumetry of the amygdala and hippocampus. A, Volumetry in the early group. B, Volumetry in the late group. Asterisks represent levels of significance (single asterisk indicates .05; double asterisks, .01).

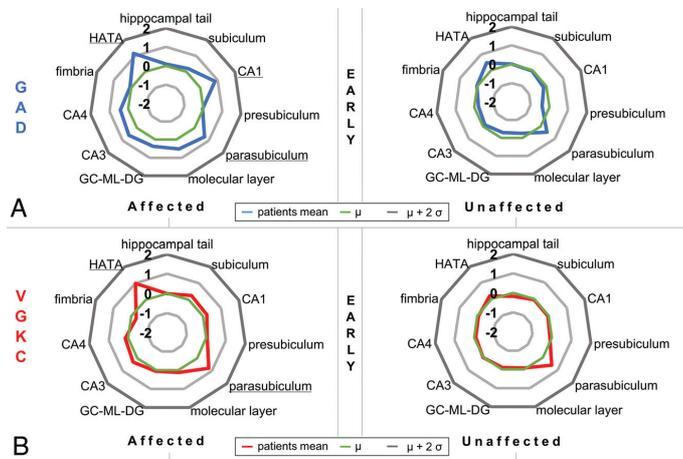


FIG 2. Starplots showing hippocampal subfield volume differences between patients in the early group and controls. Z values reflect the hippocampal subfield volume difference between patients in the early group and controls in the affected and the unaffected hemispheric sides. Underlined words indicate statistical significance of the respective hippocampal subfield ($P < .05$) in post hoc tests between patients and controls following a multivariate linear model (see MATERIALS AND METHODS and supporting information in On-line Tables 3–8). A, Relative hippocampal subfield volumes of the affected and unaffected sides of GAD-LE. B, Relative hippocampal subfield volumes of the affected and unaffected sides of VGKC-LE. GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area.

RESULTS

Volumetry of Amygdala and Hippocampus

Compared with matched controls, the amygdala showed a higher volume in early GAD-LE and late GAD-LE (both, $P = .03$; Fig 1), whereas VGKC-LE showed only a higher volume in the early group ($P = .004$). No group differences between early and late groups and controls were found in the volume of the hippocampus.

Volumetry of Hippocampal Subfields

Volumetry of hippocampal subfields yielded hippocampal fingerprints specific to the serogroup and hemispheric side. Multivariate linear models indicated statistically significant volume differences between patients and controls in the affected hemisphere for the early GAD group, the late GAD group, and the early VGKC group ($P < .02$), but not for the late VGKC group ($P = .12$). The most noticeable subfield differences were found among the early groups: We observed that volumes of CA1, the hippocampus-amygdala transition area, and the parasubiculum were significantly higher on the affected side in patients with early GAD-LE compared with their matched controls (all, $P < .04$), while in early VGKC-LE, this was the case for the hippocampus-amygdala transition area and the parasubiculum (all $P < .01$; see Fig 2 and supporting information in On-line Tables 3–8). Because 10 patients in the early VGKC group were positively tested for autoantibodies against LGI1, we also compared the patients with LGI1 and the early VGKC group without LGI1 with matched controls and found significant differences ($P < .01$, Fig 3). Please see the supporting information in On-line Tables

3–8 and On-line Tables 9 and 10 for the full results of the statistical analyses.

The anatomic 3D visualization of results illustrates subregional volume alterations. This and the schematic plots of Z values as a function of the estimated anatomic distance from the amygdala reveal an anterior-to-posterior gradient with volume-increased hippocampal subfields in the anterior part (as opposed to the posterior part of the hippocampus) only in the early GAD group (Fig 4).

Classification Performance

The decision tree could successfully distinguish between patients with early LGI1 and early GAD with a specificity of 87% and sensitivity of 80% (positive predictive value = 72.2%; negative predictive value = 90.9%; accuracy = 84.8%; F1 score = 0.76; Fig 3). Permutation testing further confirmed an above-chance classification performance ($P = .002$). A post hoc analysis of feature selection showed the fimbria to be of the highest importance for classification (Gini = 0.49), followed by CA1 (Gini = 0.27), the presubiculum (Gini = 0.13), and the

hippocampal tail (Gini = 0.11). Differentiation between the early GAD group and the early VGKC group reached only a specificity of 59% and a sensitivity of 61% (positive predictive value = 64.1%; negative predictive value = 56.5%; accuracy = 60.4%; F1 score = 0.63), and permutation testing could not confirm an above-chance classification performance ($P = .16$).

DISCUSSION

This study yields 4 main results: Mesiotemporal volume alterations in patients with antibody-associated LE are most prominent in an early stage (stage-specificity), they primarily occur in the clinically affected hemispheric side (side-specificity), and hippocampal volume alterations are antibody-specific for GAD, VGKC, and LGI1 on a group level (autoantibody-specificity) and may discriminate between GAD and LGI1 on an individual level using a decision tree classifier (classification).

Stage-Specificity

Between those with GAD-LE and controls, volumetry of the amygdala yields differences in the early and the late groups. Volumetry of VGKC-LE and controls in contrast shows amygdala group differences only in the early group (Fig 1, with supporting information in On-line Table 9). The results of amygdala volumetry are paralleled by results of the multivariate linear model of hippocampal-subfield volumetry (see supporting information in On-line Tables 3–8), whereas no overall differences between patients and controls were found in the entire hippocampal volume (Fig 1). The analysis of stage-specificity in a

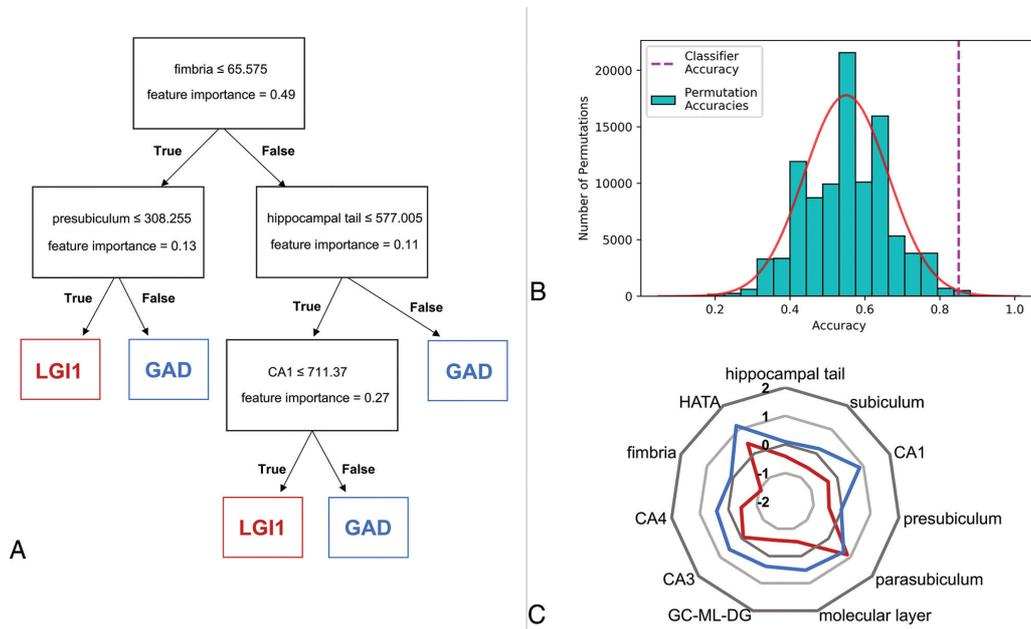


FIG 3. Decision tree classification. Decision tree classification between LGI1 and GAD using hippocampal subfield volumes from the hemisphere affected in the EEG in early-stage LE. **A**, Decision tree with importance of features. **B**, Histogram showing the number of label-shift permutations for each accuracy bin. The solid red line displays a fitted Gaussian curve describing the underlying probability density function. The dashed purple line marks the classifier performance on the real data. **C**, Starplot showing Z values of the hippocampal subfield volume differences between LGI1-LE and GAD-LE in the affected hemispheric side (see supporting information in On-line Tables 3 and 5 for statistics). HATA indicates hippocampus-amygdala transition area; GC-ML-DG, granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus.

retrospective clinical study like the current one is challenged by therapeutic interventions. Whereas most patients in the early group had not undergone immunotherapy, most patients in the late group had (see Table 1 and supporting information in On-line Tables 1 and 2). It is, therefore, difficult to determine whether changes observed between the early and the late groups are due to treatment or occur after treatment. Those with GAD-LE have been described as less responsive to immunotherapy compared with those with VGKC-LE, and the conspicuous persistence of mesiotemporal volume alterations in those with late GAD-LE (between-group differences also in late groups) may reflect a poor response to therapy. VGKC-LE, in turn, shows no mesiotemporal volume alterations in the late group, which may be treatment- or disease-related. There has been accruing evidence that abnormal findings on MR imaging are most prominent and specific in the early course of the disease,^{24,25} emphasizing the idea of an MR imaging-based classification on clinical grounds, when early diagnosis is vital for the patient. Higher volumes of mesiotemporal structures in the initial phase of LE may be explained by a functional loss of energy-dependent sodium-potassium adenosine triphosphatase with consecutive cellular swelling and cytotoxic edema due to persistent neuronal damage.^{26,27} The late course of LE, particularly LE with LGI1 autoantibodies, has been reported to result in hippocampal sclerosis as residual damage, characterized by atrophy of the hippocampus.^{9,25,28}

Indeed, in our study, LGI1-LE shows the most prominent atrophy of the hippocampus already in an early stage compared with GAD-LE and VGKC-LE, possibly heralding the onset of hippocampal sclerosis (Fig 3C).

Side-Specificity

Previous MR imaging studies have found biamygdalar swelling in patients with LE.^{15,25} This study is the first to reorient MR imaging volumes according to lateralization of EEG abnormalities, and normal contralateral EEG does not preclude pathologic affection of the contralateral hemisphere. Nevertheless, volume differences between patients and controls after reorientation could be found only in the affected hemispheric amygdala. This suggests that at least in its early phase, LE might be a unihemispheric disease. This notion is corroborated by the unilateral hippocampal signal changes observed in conventional visual assessment in most patients (Table 1). Navarro et al²⁹ have suggested that LGI1-LE may initially evolve in 1 hemisphere and progress to bilateral effects before immunomodulatory treatment. Indeed, in our study, the asymmetry of amygdala volumes was more pronounced in the early group. It is open to discussion whether biamygdalar swelling found in previous studies was reported due to the inclusion of patients with LE evolving in both the left and the right hemisphere or whether it shows the consequence of bihemispheric progression. In any case, there is skepticism as to whether

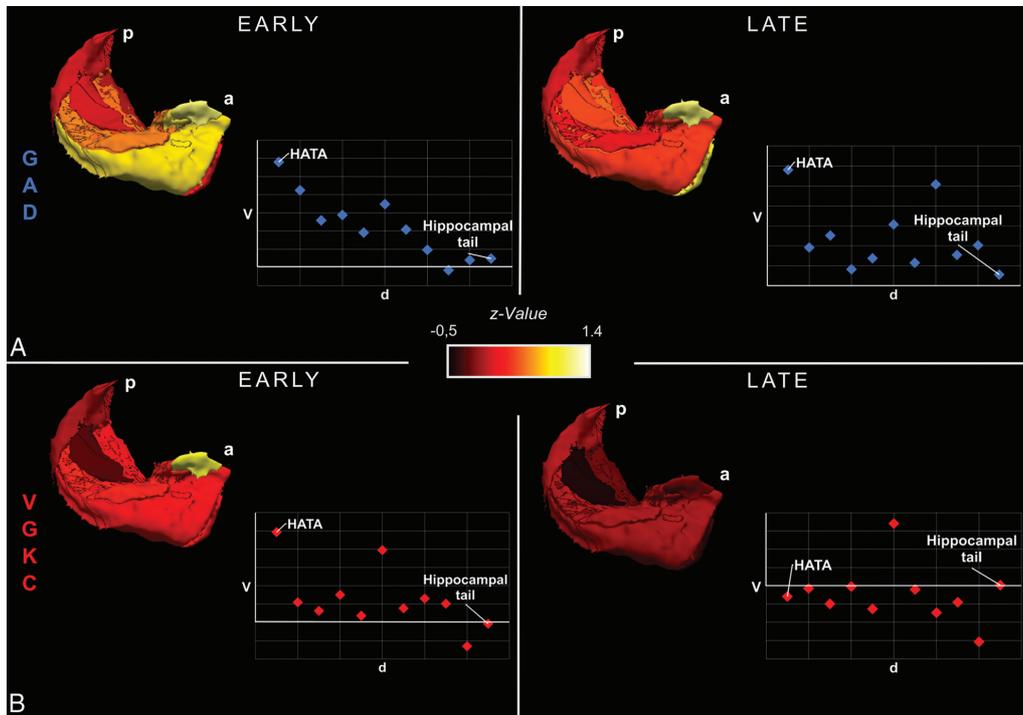


FIG 4. 3D visualization showing hippocampal subfield volume differences between patients and controls. 3D visualization of group differences between all GAD-LE and controls (A) as well as between VGKC-LE and controls (B) using hippocampal subfield volumes from the affected hemisphere in early and late stages. Schematic scatterplots show Z values of volumes as a function of the approximate spatial distance from the amygdala. P indicates posterior; a, anterior; d, distance; V, volume. Please note the anterior-to-posterior gradient of subfield volume alterations in early GAD-LE and how the gradient tapers off in late GAD-LE.

bilateral MR imaging abnormalities should be considered a diagnostic criterion in LE.³

Autoantibody-Specificity

The presence of the limbic syndrome and numerous histopathologic studies confirming neuronal loss and lymphocytic infiltration mainly in the amygdala and the hippocampus^{30,31} both lead to the understanding of LE as a mesiotemporal disease. Although autoantibody-specific imaging features have also been found in extratemporal regions, the radiologic MR imaging signature of LE is characterized by hyperintensity in T2WI and/or FLAIR images and volume alteration of the amygdala and hippocampus.^{12,14} In the current study, we observed significantly higher volumes of CA1 and the hippocampus-amygdala transition area on the affected hemisphere in patients with early GAD-LE compared with their matched controls, whereas in early VGKC-LE, this was the case for the hippocampus-amygdala transition area and parasubiculum. Studies in patients with focal lesions limited to the CA1 region of the hippocampus attribute a crucial role in autobiographic memory retrieval, mental time travel, and autoeotic consciousness to CA1.^{32,33} Most interesting, these cognitive functions have been shown to be impaired in GAD-LE,³⁴ and the swollen CA1 region in GAD-

LE most likely constitutes the structural correlate of this cognitive deficit.

It is open to discussion why CA1 is selectively affected in GAD-LE. It has been shown that CA1 is particularly vulnerable to a variety of pathologic conditions such as ischemia, inflammation, or increased metabolic demand related to epileptic activity^{27,35} and CA1 neurons express an extraordinary high density of *N*-methyl-D-aspartate NR2 subunits.^{36,37} Neuronal death in CA1 in GAD-LE may, thus, be caused by a cytotoxic accumulation of Ca^{2+} following excessive stimulation of the *N*-methyl-D-aspartate receptor by an abnormally high accumulation of glutamic acid due to autoantibody-mediated dysfunction of GAD.

A recent study on the structure-function relationship in the healthy human hippocampus suggested an anterior-to-posterior gradient of distinctive temporolimbic connectivity.³⁸ The anterior parts of the hippocampus were shown to emphasize associations with memory- and emotion-related terms. This finding is paralleled by the anterior-to-posterior gradient with volume-increased hippocampal regions we found in early GAD-LE and emphasizes its functional relevance (Fig 4). In late GAD-LE, the anterior-to-posterior gradient is not prominent, and instead a generalized structural alteration of the hippocampus is observed. It may be most cautiously speculated that this anterior-to-posterior

gradient in early GAD-LE is indicative of an acute inflammatory process originating from the amygdala and progressing via the hippocampus-amygdala transition area³⁹ toward the hippocampal tail along the long hippocampal axis.

Classification

Markedly, observed mesiotemporal differences were sufficiently defined so that classification was possible on an individual level between LGI1 and GAD by means of supervised machine learning. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first approach of computerized classification between serogroups in LE on the basis of postprocessed MR imaging data described. However, our classification results need to be interpreted cautiously: Despite using a leave-one-out cross-validation scheme to leverage most of our data for training, we cannot rule out possible effects of overfitting due to the low and unbalanced sample size. It has been thoroughly discussed in recent neuroimaging literature that small sample sizes inflate reported accuracies, suggesting that our results are rather over- than underestimating sensitivity and specificity.⁴⁰ Despite these limitations, using permutation testing, we could show that our classifier extracts useful patterns of the hippocampal profiles of the real patient distributions and does not fit random distributions. Nevertheless, due to the described limitations, our findings do not yet translate into gains for patients with LE in more than an experimental setting with a wide range of autoantibody-associated subtypes of LE, or even in those without shown autoantibody association (antibody-negative LE). The recent surge in the discovery of novel LE-associated autoantibodies implies that these patients with antibody-negative LE could quite possibly have yet-unknown autoantibodies. They might obtain a syndrome-based diagnosis only based on their clinical presentation. Thus, it would be very helpful to differentially define imaging correlates of various LE subtypes; however, larger sample sizes are needed for a reliable predictive analysis of possible imaging biomarkers.

CONCLUSIONS

Diagnostic attention has long been focused on the serostatus of patients with LE. It only shifted to their clinical presentation when the large number of seronegative patients presenting with a limbic syndrome became evident and novel studies bolstered the importance of prompt therapy, even before the results of antibody testing are available. MR imaging is an important pillar of early diagnostics and frequently casts clinical suspicion toward autoimmune encephalitis. However, the MR imaging signature of LE, hallmarked by temporomesial abnormalities, appears to be overly simplistic in light of the current findings and with regard to the wide clinical disease spectrum of LE. The method presented here is clearly not yet applicable in a clinical setting. Instead, it may be seen as a first step toward bridging the gap between a wide clinical disease spectrum and a relatively uniform description of MR imaging findings in patients with LE. Furthermore, our results stress the existence of a multitude of pathologic entities covered by the umbrella term “limbic encephalitis.” It is our hope that this study and future imaging research will add weight to using MR imaging within the diagnostic work-

up of patients with LE and will contribute to a most detailed description of pathologic entities.

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2.2 Supplementary material

ON-LINE APPENDIX

Antibody Testing

After 2014, screening for onco-neuronal antibodies was performed using semiquantitative immunoblots (EUROLINE PNS 12; DL 1111-1601-7 G; Euroimmun, Lübeck, Germany) coated with recombinant antigen or antigen fragments (dilution: serum, 1:100; cerebrospinal liquor, 1:1). In parallel, immunocytochemistry was performed using Human Embryonic Kidney 293-cells with expression of antigens on the cell surface (IIFT: Auto-immune Enzephalitis Mosaik1, Euroimmun; FA 1120-1005-1; GAD65-IIFT, Euroimmun; FA 1022-1005-50) for NMDAR, CASPR, LGI1, GABAA, GABAB, AMPAR, and GAD65 autoantibodies (dilution, serum 1:10; cerebrospinal liquor, 1:1). Before

2014, detection of GAD antibodies in serum was performed using an anti-125I-GAD radioimmunoprecipitation assay (normal values, ≤ 1 U/mL; Wetherall Institute of Molecular Medicine, Oxford, UK; or Euroimmun). VGKC-complex antibodies were also examined by radioimmunoprecipitation assay (normal values, < 100 picomolar; Wetherall Institute of Molecular Medicine or Euroimmun). Antibodies against LGI1 and CASPR2 were detected by indirect immunofluorescence using formalin-fixed human Embryonic Kidney 293-cells containing membrane bound LGI1 or CASPR2 (normal values, $< 1:10$; all tests performed by Euroimmun). These tests were not performed before 2010, which is why 13 patients in the early VGKC group and 14 patients in the late VGKC group have not been tested for CASPR2 or LGI1.

On-line Table 1: Patient characteristics and antibody testing—early groups^a

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Early GAD	1	F	48	23	Left temporal	—	Neg. (S. and L.)	—
Early GAD	2	F	17	11	Right temporal	—	—	—
Early GAD	3	F	25	16	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	—
Early GAD	4	M	26	3	Left temporal	—	—	T2-FLAIR acute: mesiotemporal hyperintensities left hemisphere
Early GAD	5	F	32	24	Right temporal	—	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: normal
Early GAD	6	F	18	1	Right temporal	—	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: volume increase and hyperintensities right amygdala and right hippocampus
Early GAD	7	F	43	8	Right temporal	—	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities left hippocampus
Early GAD	8	F	24	5	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase left mesiotemporal
Early GAD	9	F	42	5	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities left hippocampus and left amygdala
Early GAD	10	M	43	3	Temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities left hippocampus and left amygdala
Early GAD	11	F	49	5	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase right mesiotemporal
Early GAD	12	M	32	2	—	Steroids, plasmapheresis	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and slide atrophy of right hippocampus
Early GAD	13	M	35	5	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase left hippocampus and amygdala
Early GAD	14	F	27	5	Temporal	—	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase right mesiotemporal
Early GAD	15	M	58	3	Right temporal	—	Neg. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: slide hippocampal atrophy bilateral, no signal alterations
Early GAD	16	F	43	11	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S.; L neg.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase left hippocampus and amygdala
Early GAD	17	F	26	16	—	—	Pos. (S.; L not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: slide volume increase of right amygdala, no signal alterations
Early GAD	18	F	28	0	Left temporal	—	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of both amygdalae
Early GAD	19	M	45	12	Left temporal	—	—	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of left amygdala and anterior hippocampus

Continued on next page

On-line Table 1: Continued

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Early GAD	20	M	27	16	Left temporal	–	Neg. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of left amygdala
Early GAD	21	F	21	22	Bilateral temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral hyperintensities in amygdalae and hippocampi
Early GAD	22	F	23	17	Normal	–	Pos. (S.; L. neg.)	T2-FLAIR acute: volume increase left amygdala and hyperintensities in left hippocampus
Early GAD	23	F	43	6	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of left amygdala and left hippocampus
Early VGKC	24	M	55	14	Normal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: normal
Early VGKC	25	M	60	3	Bilateral temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. neg.)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral hyperintensities increase of amygdala and anterior hippocampus
Early VGKC	26	F	48	22	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase left hippocampus
Early VGKC	27	M	68	9	Bilateral temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral hippocampal hyperintensities and volume increase
Early VGKC	28	F	53	11	Right temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of right amygdala; atrophy of the right hippocampus
Early VGKC	29	M	73	11	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: volume-increased amygdalae (right > left)
Early VGKC	30	M	70	5	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensity and volume increase of left amygdala; questionable atrophy right hippocampus
Early VGKC	31	M	67	5	Right temporal	–	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: narrowed hippocampi and left mesiotemporal hyperintensities
Early VGKC	32	F	20	10	Right temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	–
Early VGKC	33	F	61	0	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral hyperintensities and volume increase of amygdalae and anterior hippocampi
Early VGKC	34	M	69	12	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: questionable left mesiotemporal hyperintensity and volume increase
Early VGKC	35	M	61	1	Left temporal	Steroids, plasmapheresis	Pos. (S.; L. neg.)	T2-FLAIR acute: left hippocampus with subtle atrophy
Early VGKC	36	F	23	0	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: questionable bilateral hyperintensity in the pulvinar thalami

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On-line Table 1: Continued

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Early VGKC (CASPR2)	37	M	38	6	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral hyperintensities of amygdalae
Early VGKC (CASPR2)	38	M	82	23	Right temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: right mesiotemporal hyperintensities and volume increase (especially in amygdala)
Early VGKC (LGII)	39	F	48	4	Right temporal	–	Neg. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: hyperintensities and volume increase of right amygdala and hippocampus
Early VGKC (LGII)	40	F	57	2	Right temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute enlarged mesiotemporal structures, questionable changes in signal
Early VGKC (LGII)	41	F	72	3	Normal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	–
Early VGKC (LGII)	42	F	71	13	Normal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: signs of atherosclerotic encephalopathy, no mesiotemporal hyperintensities or volume alterations
Early VGKC (LGII)	43	M	65	7	Bilateral temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption	Pos. (S; L. neg.)	T2-FLAIR acute: microangiopathy
Early VGKC (LGII)	44	M	62	4	No seizures documented	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: prominent right amygdala with subtle hyperintensity
Early VGKC (LGII)	45	M	76	6	Normal	Steroids, immunoadsorption, intravenous immunoglobulins	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: global brain atrophy; unspecific periventricular white matter lesions on FLAIR
Early VGKC (LGII)	46	M	74	2	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S; L. neg.)	–
Early VGKC (LGII)	47	M	54	11	Right temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins	Neg. (S. and L.)	T2-FLAIR acute: bilateral prominent and signal-enhanced amygdalae with signal enhancement; narrowed hippocampi
Early VGKC (LGII)	48	M	53	7	Normal	–	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	T2-FLAIR acute: unspecific white matter lesions

Note:—S, indicates in serum; L, in liquor; not tested, not tested at the time of the respective MR imaging scan; –, not conducted; Neg., negative; Pos., positive; ID, identification.

^a Patient characteristics of all patient groups included in the study (early GAD-LE, early VGKC-LE, late GAD-LE, late VGKC-LE).

On-line Table 2: Patient characteristics and antibody testing—late groups^a

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Late GAD	49	M	29	112	Right temporal	Steroids, azathioprine	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: bilateral abnormal mesiotemporal structures
Late GAD	50	F	32	53	–	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: hyperintense left amygdala
Late GAD	51	F	26	64	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: volume increase and slight hyperintensity of left amygdala and hippocampus
Late GAD	52	F	24	92	Bilateral temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: volume increase and hyperintensity of both amygdalae; hyperintensity of both hippocampi (left > right)
Late GAD	53	F	29	87	Bilateral temporal	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: normal mesiotemporal structures
Late GAD	54	F	48	110	–	–	Not tested	–
Late GAD	55	F	31	72	Left temporal	Steroids	Neg. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: left mesiotemporal structures appear to be volume-increased
Late GAD	56	F	48	48	–	–	Not tested	–
Late GAD	57	F	21	42	Left temporal	–	Neg. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: volume-increased and hyperintense left amygdala
Late GAD	21	F	21	25	–	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: volume-increased amygdala (left > right)
Late GAD	2	F	23	83	Left temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: atrophy right hippocampus
Late GAD	58	F	27	91	Bilateral temporal	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: bilateral hippocampal atrophy
Late GAD	3	F	26	27	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	–
Late GAD	4	M	29	42	Bilateral temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins, natalizumab	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	–
Late GAD	5	F	34	56	–	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins	Not tested	Follow-up scan: normal
Late GAD	59	F	30	115	Left temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins, immunoadsorption, plasmapheresis, cyclophosphamide	Not tested	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and volume increase of right amygdala and hippocampus; hyperintensity left hippocampus
Late GAD	6	F	21	35	–	Steroids, immunoadsorption, cyclophosphamide, mycophenolate mofetil	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: subtle bilateral hippocampal atrophy

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On-line Table 2: Continued

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Late GAD	8	F	26	21	Left temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption, mycophenolate mofetil	Not tested	Follow-up scan: hyperintense left mesiotemporal structures; no atrophy
Late GAD	60	M	17	55	–	–	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: questionable signal abnormality left hippocampus
Late GAD	61	M	35	69	–	–	Not tested	Follow-up scan: normal
Late GAD	10	M	48	63	–	Steroids, basiliximab	Not tested	Follow-up scan: left hippocampal atrophy and enlarged left amygdala
Late GAD	11	F	52	50	–	Steroids, basiliximab	Not tested	Follow-up scan: bilateral volume increase of amygdalae
Late GAD	62	F	24	100	–	–	Not tested	Follow-up scan: unclear lesion frontal lobe; all other areas normal
Late GAD	63	M	27	70	–	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: left hippocampal sclerosis
Late GAD	64	M	24	65	Left temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: normal mesiotemporal structures
Late GAD	14	F	31	44	–	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: mesiotemporal volume increase and hyperintensity
Late GAD	65	M	51	44	Right temporal	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and subtle volume increase of right amygdala and hippocampus
Late GAD	66	F	61	79	Bilateral temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and subtle volume increase of right amygdala and hippocampus and of the anterior left hippocampus
Late GAD	67	M	44	45	Normal	–	Not tested	Follow-up scan: subtle hyperintensity of right hippocampus
Late GAD	68	F	24	31	Right temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity of right hippocampus and amygdala
Late GAD	69	M	63	27	Right temporal	–	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and volume increase right amygdala
Late GAD	70	F	30	75	Left temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption plasmapheresis	Not tested	Follow-up scan: declining hyperintensity right hippocampus

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On-line Table 2: Continued

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Late GAD	71	F	47	69	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and volume increase of the left amygdala
Late VGKC	2	M	64	59	–	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: bilateral hippocampal atrophy
Late VGKC	3	F	53	73	–	Steroids, tacrolimus	Neg. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: normal
Late VGKC	5	F	56	40	–	Steroids, azathioprine	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: left hippocampal sclerosis
Late VGKC	6	M	79	87	Right temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: subtle bilateral hippocampal atrophy
Late VGKC	7	M	78	110	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and volume increase of the left amygdala
Late VGKC (CASPR2)	14	M	40	29	–	Steroids, plasmapheresis, mycophenolate mofetil	Not tested	–
Late VGKC	9	F	23	43	–	Steroids	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: subtle mesiotemporal hyperintensity in the left hemisphere
Late VGKC	10	F	68	90	Right temporal	Steroids	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: right hippocampal sclerosis
Late VGKC	11	M	75	84	Right temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: questionable left mesiotemporal hyperintensity and swelling
Late VGKC (LGII)	16	F	52	47	Left temporal	Steroids, intravenous immunoglobulins	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity of the right mesiotemporal structures
Late VGKC (LGII)	18	F	74	27	Left temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption	Not tested	–
Late VGKC	13	F	26	37	–	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: normal
Late VGKC (LGII)	19	F	73	33	Right temporal	Steroids	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: signs of subcortical arteriosclerotic encephalopathy; normal mesiotemporal structures
Late VGKC	72	F	47	45	–	Steroids	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	–
Late VGKC	73	F	64	82	Left temporal	Steroids	Neg. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: bilateral mesiotemporal hyperintensity (especially left amygdala); no hippocampal sclerosis
Late VGKC (CASPR2)	74	M	52	61	Bilateral temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: bilateral mesiotemporal hyperintensity and volume increase

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On-line Table 2: Continued

Study Group	ID	Sex	Age at MR Imaging (yr)	Time between Onset and Scan (mo)	Lateralization EEG	Immunotherapy before MR Imaging Acquisition	Antibody Status (at the Time of MR Imaging Acquisition)	Clinical Imaging
Late VGKC	75	M	31	91	Left temporal	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: bilateral hyperintensity and volume increase of amygdalae (left > right)
Late VGKC (CASPR2)	76	M	64	86	–	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: global brain atrophy
Late VGKC	77	M	52	51	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: hyperintensity and volume increase of left mesiotemporal
Late VGKC (CASPR2)	78	M	53	65	Left temporal	Steroids, immunoadsorption, azathioprine	Pos. (S. and L.)	Follow-up scan: hyperintense mesiotemporal structures right hemisphere
Late VGKC (CASPR2)	79	F	45	47	Left temporal	Steroids	Pos. (S.; L. not tested)	Follow-up scan: cortical atrophy; declining swelling of left amygdala; no hippocampal sclerosis
Late VGKC	80	F	76	67	–	Steroids	Not tested	Follow-up scan: global brain atrophy; microangiopathic white matter disease

Note:—indicates not conducted; S., in serum; L., in liquor; not tested, not tested at the time of the respective MR imaging scan; Neg., negative; Pos., positive; ID, identification.

^a Characteristics of all patient groups included in the study (early GAD-LE, early VGKC-LE, late GAD-LE, late VGKC-LE).

On-line Table 3: Volumetry of hippocampal subfields in patients and controls—multivariate linear models in early GAD group^a

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 44) = 2.33$, Prob > F = 0.023 ($n = 46$) ^b				
Post Hoc T Tests ^c	Coefficient	Standard Error	T	$P > t $
Hippocampal tail	–9.1	22.6	–0.40	.690
Subiculum	–11.6	15.8	–0.73	.466
CA1	–64.3	26.2	–2.46	.018 ^b
Presubiculum	0.8	12.0	0.07	.947
Parasubiculum	–7.7	3.7	–2.07	.045 ^b
Molecular layer	–29.9	21.4	–1.40	.168
GC-ML-DG	–12.1	12.6	–0.96	.340
CA3	–17.1	11.2	–1.61	.114
CA4	–12.4	11.4	–1.09	.284
Fimbria	–0.4	4.6	–0.10	.925
HATA	–9.9	3.3	–3.01	.004 ^b

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a On-line Tables 3 to 8 show multivariate linear models including post hoc *t* tests of hippocampal subfield volumes between the different patient groups and their matched controls (as shown in Fig 2).

^b Significant values.

^c Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 4: Early VGKC group

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 48) = 2.48$, Prob > F = 0.015 ^a ($n = 50$)				
Post Hoc T Tests ^b	Coefficient	Standard Error	T	$P > t $
Hippocampal tail	1.2	21.9	0.05	.957
Subiculum	–16.2	17.7	–0.91	.365
CA1	–19.5	24.0	–0.81	.422
Presubiculum	–2.5	14.4	–0.18	.861
Parasubiculum	–10.0	3.7	–2.68	.010 ^a
Molecular layer	–10.5	21.7	–0.48	.632
GC-ML-DG	–3.1	11.6	–0.27	.791
CA3	–8.7	8.3	–1.05	.301
CA4	–5.2	9.4	–0.56	.581
Fimbria	7.5	7.9	0.95	.347
HATA	–12.8	3.7	–3.43	.001 ^a

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a Significant.

^b Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 5: Early LGII group

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 18) = 3.44$, Prob > F = 0.001 ^a (n = 20)				
Post Hoc T Tests ^b	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Test	P > t
Hippocampal tail	21.5	35.0	0.62	.546
Subiculum	21.4	23.6	0.91	.377
CA1	5.5	44.7	0.12	.904
Presubiculum	20.6	18.3	1.13	.275
Parasubiculum	-9.9	5.2	-1.91	.072
Molecular layer	19.9	34.5	0.58	.572
GC-ML-DG	11.8	19.1	0.62	.545
CA3	-5.0	16.0	-0.32	.752
CA4	4.3	16.0	0.27	.787
Fimbria	29.1	8.4	3.47	.003 ^a
HATA	-5.5	6.6	-0.83	.418

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a Significant.

^b Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 8: Late VGKC group

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 42) = 1.62$, Prob > F = 0.128 (n = 44)				
Post Hoc T Tests ^a	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Test	P > t
Hippocampal tail	-0.5	29.0	-0.02	.986
Subiculum	16.8	19.5	0.86	.395
CA1	1.8	28.7	0.06	.951
Presubiculum	7.1	13.3	0.53	.599
Parasubiculum	-6.0	3.7	-1.62	.114
Molecular layer	10.7	23.4	0.46	.651
GC-ML-DG	5.0	11.5	0.43	.667
CA3	0.2	9.3	0.02	.986
CA4	0.8	9.7	0.08	.938
Fimbria	11.0	6.4	1.72	.092
HATA	1.5	4.3	0.34	.734

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 6: Early VGKC group without LGII

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 28) = 2.75$, Prob > F = 0.015 ^a (n = 30)				
Post Hoc T Tests ^b	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Test	P > t
Hippocampal tail	-17.4	26.9	-0.65	.523
Subiculum	-41.7	23.8	-1.75	.091
CA1	-49.1	29.0	-1.70	.101
Presubiculum	-16.9	19.6	-0.86	.398
Parasubiculum	-11.0	5.3	-2.07	.048 ^a
Molecular layer	-38.7	27.5	-1.41	.169
GC-ML-DG	-16.5	13.9	-1.18	.247
CA3	-15.4	9.4	-1.64	.113
CA4	-15.1	11.5	-1.31	.200
Fimbria	-5.0	11.1	-0.45	.655
HATA	-17.2	4.3	-3.99	<.001 ^a

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a Significant.

^b Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 9: Volumetry of amygdala and hippocampus in patients and controls (1-tailed, 2-sample t tests) in early groups^a

23 Early GAD-LE Group + 23 Controls (n = 46) and 25 Early VGKC-LE Group + 25 Controls (n = 50)			
	DOF	T Test	P > t
Early GAD-LE			
Amygdala affected	44	1.92	.031 ^b
Hippocampus affected	44	1.35	
Amygdala unaffected	44	-0.21	>.05
Hippocampus unaffected	44	-0.74	
Early VGKC-LE			
Amygdala affected	48	2.82	.004 ^b
Hippocampus affected	48	0.67	
Amygdala unaffected	48	1.19	>.05
Hippocampus unaffected	48	-0.22	

Note:—DOF indicates degrees of freedom; Pr, probability.

^a One-tailed, 2-sample t tests of the amygdala and hippocampus in the affected and unaffected hemispheres between patients with LE and matched controls (as shown in Fig 1).

^b Significant values.

On-line Table 7: Late GAD group

Multivariate Linear Model, $F(11, 64) = 3.65$, Prob > F = 0.001 ^a (n = 66)				
Post Hoc T Tests ^b	Coefficient	Standard Error	T Test	P > t
Hippocampal tail	-3.5	16.0	-0.22	.826
Subiculum	28.4	11.5	2.46	.016 ^a
CA1	29.4	19.2	1.53	.131
Presubiculum	4.1	9.1	0.45	.657
Parasubiculum	2.7	2.3	1.18	.242
Molecular layer	22.4	14.7	1.53	.132
GC-ML-DG	8.1	8.4	0.97	.334
CA3	5.5	8.8	0.62	.538
CA4	6.1	7.5	0.82	.418
Fimbria	5.2	3.9	1.34	.184
HATA	10.1	2.2	4.58	<.001 ^a

Note:—GC-ML-DG indicates granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus; HATA, hippocampus-amygdala transition area; Prob, probability.

^a Significant.

^b Protected by the Fisher least-significant difference.

On-line Table 10: Volumetry of amygdala and hippocampus in patients and controls (1-tailed, 2-sample t tests) in late groups^a

33 late GAD-LE Group + 33 Controls (n = 66) and 22 Late VGKC-LE Group + 22 Controls (n = 44)			
	DOF	T Test	P > t
Late GAD-LE			
Amygdala affected	32	2.19	.036 ^b
Hippocampus affected	32	1.62	
Amygdala unaffected	32	1.56	>.05
Hippocampus unaffected	32	0.99	
Late VGKC-LE			
Amygdala affected	21	1.33	
Hippocampus affected	21	-0.32	
Amygdala unaffected	21	0.08	>.05
Hippocampus unaffected	21	-0.57	

^a One-tailed, 2-sample t tests of the amygdala and hippocampus in the affected and unaffected hemispheres between patients with LE and matched controls (as shown in Fig 1).

^b Significant values.

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