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Hallucinations in Parkinson's disease: A window into the phenomenology and physiopathological bases of delusions in neurodegenerative diseases

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Hallucinations are a frequent neuropsychiatric complication in Parkinson's disease (PD). They may be present from the earliest stages of the disease and manifest from mild delusional phenomena, including passage and presence hallucinations, to well-structured visual hallucinations with loss of insight.

Tracking the progressive phenomenological changes of hallucinations and delusions in PD helps to understand the different neuronal networks that become impaired through the neurodegenerative process. Further, the different contribution of visuoperceptive areas and their functional connections with the dorsal and ventral attentional networks and the default mode network delineate also a framework that explains how environmental stimuli are perceived, built-up into visual constructs, and finally transferred into consciousness.

The 'big jump' between the existence of external objects and their perception by human brain explains how mental imagery is able to intrude into consciousness and create such false but vivid hallucinatory experiences.

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