INTRODUCTION: A topic of increasing importance in the field of aging and dementia is the prediction of progression to objective cognitive impairment in individuals with subjective cognitive complaints. The results of some longitudinal studies published recently suggest that subjective cognitive impairment might be a reliable predictor of subsequent dementia.

AIMS: To investigate the potential progression to MCI or dementia in individuals with subjective cognitive impairment.

METHODS: Inclusion criteria were age > 45 years and a new referral to our memory centre, presenting with cognitive complaints. Exclusion criteria were MMSE score < 24 (objective cognitive impairment: MCI, or dementia), and disorders associated with cognitive impairment (including depression). Follow-up neuropsychological assessment was performed 12 months after enrollment in the study.

RESULTS: Subjects enrolled in the study (n = 82) were at baseline on average 66 years, scored 27,5 on MMSE, and had 14,5 years of education; sixty-four of the subjects were female. Subjects were compared to age- and education-matched controls (n = 25). Follow-up was performed 12 months after enrollment. Cognitive decline was observed in 8,45% of followed-up subjects, who met the revised criteria for MCI, and in none of the normal controls.

CONCLUSIONS: Individuals with subjective cognitive impairment may have a greater rate of cognitive decline as compared to the normal control cohort in a longer follow-up period. The preliminary results of our study add to the growing weight of evidence that subjective cognitive complaints in cognitively normal individuals may be predictive of future cognitive decline and dementia.