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Clément Abi Nader, Nicholas Ayache, Giovanni B Frisoni, Philippe Robert, Marco Lorenzi. Simulating the outcome of amyloid treatments in Alzheimer's Disease from multi-modal imaging and clinical data. 2020. hal-02968724v1

**HAL Id: hal-02968724**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02968724v1>**

Preprint submitted on 16 Oct 2020 (v1), last revised 10 Feb 2021 (v4)

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# Simulating the outcome of amyloid treatments in Alzheimer's Disease from multi-modal imaging and clinical data

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This manuscript was compiled on October 8, 2020

1 **Recent failures of clinical trials in Alzheimer's Disease underline the**  
2 **critical importance of identifying optimal intervention time to maxi-**  
3 **mize cognitive benefit. While several models of disease progression**  
4 **have been proposed, we still lack quantitative approaches simulat-**  
5 **ing the effect of treatment strategies on the clinical evolution. In this**  
6 **work, we present a data-driven method to model dynamical relation-**  
7 **ships between imaging and clinical biomarkers. Our approach allows**  
8 **simulating intervention at any stage of the pathology by modulat-**  
9 **ing the progression speed of the biomarkers, and by subsequently**  
10 **assessing the impact on disease evolution. When applied to multi-**  
11 **modal imaging and clinical data from the Alzheimer's Disease Neu-**  
12 **roimaging Initiative our method enables to generate hypothetical sce-**  
13 **narios of amyloid lowering interventions. Our results show that in a**  
14 **study with 1000 individuals per arm, accumulation should be com-**  
15 **pletely arrested at least 5 years before Alzheimer's dementia diagno-**  
16 **sis to lead to statistically powered improvement of clinical endpoints.**

Alzheimer's Disease | Clinical trials | Dynamical systems | Variational inference

1 The number of people affected by Alzheimer's Disease  
2 (AD) has recently exceeded 46 millions and is expected to  
3 double every 20 years (1), thus posing significant healthcare  
4 challenges. Yet, while the disease mechanisms remain in  
5 large part unknown, there are still no effective pharmaco-  
6 logical treatments leading to tangible improvements of  
7 patients' clinical progression. One of the main challenges  
8 in understanding AD is that its progression goes through  
9 a silent asymptomatic phase that can stretch over decades  
10 before a clinical diagnosis can be established based on  
11 cognitive and behavioral symptoms. To help designing  
12 appropriate intervention strategies, hypothetical models of  
13 the disease history have been proposed, characterizing the  
14 progression by a cascade of morphological and molecular  
15 changes affecting the brain, ultimately leading to cognitive  
16 impairment (2, 3). The dominant hypothesis is that disease  
17 dynamics along the asymptomatic period are driven by the  
18 deposition in the brain of the amyloid  $\beta$  peptide, triggering  
19 the so-called "amyloid cascade" (4–8). Based on this rationale,  
20 clinical trials have been focusing on the development and  
21 testing of disease modifiers targeting amyloid  $\beta$  aggregates  
22 (9), for example by increasing its clearance or blocking its  
23 accumulation. Although the amyloid hypothesis has been  
24 recently invigorated by a post-hoc analysis of the aducanumab  
25 trial (10), clinical trials failed so far to show efficacy of  
26 this kind of treatments, as the clinical primary endpoints  
27 were not met (11–13), or because of unacceptable adverse  
28 effects (14). In the past years, growing consensus emerged

29 about the critical importance of intervention time, and about  
30 the need of starting anti-amyloid treatments during the  
31 pre-symptomatic stages of the disease (15). Nevertheless,  
32 the design of optimal intervention strategies is currently not  
33 supported by quantitative analysis methods allowing to model  
34 and assess the effect of intervention time and dosing (16). The  
35 availability of models of the pathophysiology of AD would  
36 entail great potential to test and analyze clinical hypothesis  
37 characterizing AD mechanisms, progression, and intervention  
38 scenarios.

40 Within this context, quantitative models of disease progression,  
41 referred to as Disease Progression Models (DPMs), have been  
42 proposed (17–21), to quantify the dynamics of the changes  
43 affecting the brain during the whole disease span. These  
44 models rely on the statistical analysis of large datasets of  
45 different data modalities, such as clinical scores, or brain  
46 imaging measures derived from Magnetic Resonance Imaging  
47 (MRI), Amyloid- and Fluorodeoxyglucose-Positron Emission  
48 Tomography (PET) (22–24). In general, DPMs estimate

## Significance Statement

This study investigates a novel quantitative instrument for the development of intervention strategies for disease modifying drugs in Alzheimer's Disease. Our framework enables the simulation of the effect of intervention time and drug dosage on the evolution of imaging and clinical biomarkers in clinical trials. The proposed data-driven approach is based on the modeling of the spatio-temporal dynamics governing the joint evolution of imaging and clinical measurements throughout the disease. Our experimental simulations are compatible with the outcomes observed in past clinical trials, and suggest that anti-amyloid treatments should be administered at least 5 years earlier than what is currently being done in order to obtain statistically powered improvement of clinical endpoints.

Clément Abi Nader and Marco Lorenzi designed the method. Implementation was carried out by Clément Abi Nader. The manuscript was written by Clément Abi Nader with support from Marco Lorenzi, Nicholas Ayache, Giovanni B. Frisoni, and Philippe Robert.

The authors declare no competing interests.

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<sup>2</sup>Data used in preparation of this article were obtained from the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI) database (adni.loni.usc.edu). As such, the investigators within the ADNI contributed to the design and implementation of ADNI and/or provided data but did not participate in analysis or writing of this report. A complete listing of ADNI investigators can be found at: [http://adni.loni.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/how\\_to\\_apply/ADNI\\_Acknowledgement\\_List.pdf](http://adni.loni.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/how_to_apply/ADNI_Acknowledgement_List.pdf).

49 a long-term disease evolution from the joint analysis of  
50 multivariate time-series acquired on a short-term time-scale.  
51 Due to the temporal delay between the disease onset and  
52 the appearance of the first symptoms, DPMs rely on the  
53 identification of an appropriate temporal reference to describe  
54 the long-term disease evolution (25, 26). These tools are  
55 promising approaches for the analysis of clinical trials data, as  
56 they allow to represent the longitudinal evolution of multiple  
57 biomarkers through a global model of disease progression.  
58 Such a model can be subsequently used as a reference in  
59 order to stage subjects and quantify their relative progression  
60 speed (27–29). However, these approaches remain purely  
61 descriptive as they don’t account for causal relationships  
62 among biomarkers. Therefore, they generally don’t allow  
63 to simulate progression scenarios based on hypothetical  
64 intervention strategies, thus providing a limited interpretation  
65 of the pathological dynamics. This latter capability is of  
66 utmost importance for planning and assessment of disease  
67 modifying treatments.

69 To fill this gap, recent works such as (30, 31) proposed to  
70 model AD progression based on specific assumptions on the  
71 biochemical processes of pathological protein propagation.  
72 These approaches explicitly define biomarkers interactions  
73 through the specification of sets of Ordinary Differential  
74 Equations (ODEs), and are ideally suited to simulate the  
75 effect of drug interventions (32). However, these methods are  
76 mostly based on the arbitrary choices of pre-defined evolution  
77 models, which are not inferred from data. This issue was  
78 recently addressed by (33), where the authors proposed an  
79 hybrid modeling method combining traditional DPMs with  
80 dynamical models of AD progression. Still, since this approach  
81 requires to design suitable models of protein propagation  
82 across brain regions, extending this method to jointly account  
83 for spatio-temporal interactions between several processes,  
84 such as amyloid propagation, glucose hypometabolism, and  
85 brain atrophy, is considerably more complex. Finally, these  
86 methods are usually designed to account for imaging data only,  
87 which prevents to jointly simulate heterogeneous measures  
88 (34), such as image-based biomarkers and clinical outcomes,  
89 the latter remaining the reference markers for patients and  
90 clinicians.

92 In this work we present a novel computational model of AD  
93 progression allowing to simulate intervention strategies across  
94 the history of the disease. The model is here used to quantify  
95 the potential effect of amyloid modifiers on the progression  
96 of brain atrophy, glucose hypometabolism, and ultimately on  
97 the clinical outcomes for different scenarios of intervention.  
98 To this end, we model the joint spatio-temporal variation  
99 of different modalities along the history of AD by identifying  
100 a system of ODEs governing the pathological progression.  
101 This latent ODEs system is specified within an interpretable  
102 low-dimensional space relating multi-modal information, and  
103 combines clinically-inspired constraints with unknown inter-  
104 actions that we wish to estimate. The interpretability of the  
105 relationships in the latent space is ensured by mapping each  
106 data modality to a specific latent coordinate. The model  
107 is formulated within a Bayesian framework, where the latent  
108 representation and dynamics are efficiently estimated  
109 through stochastic variational inference. To generate hypo-

110 thetical scenarios of amyloid lowering interventions, we apply  
111 our approach to multi-modal imaging and clinical data from  
112 the Alzheimer’s Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI). Our  
113 results provide a meaningful quantification of different interven-  
114 tion strategies, compatible with findings previously reported in  
115 clinical studies. For example, we estimate that in a study with  
116 100 individuals per arm, statistically powered improvement  
117 of clinical endpoints can be obtained by completely arresting  
118 amyloid accumulation at least 8 years before Alzheimer’s de-  
119 mentia. The minimum intervention time decreases to 5 years  
120 for studies based on 1000 individuals per arm.

## 121 Results

122 In the following sections, healthy individuals will be denoted  
123 as NL stable, subjects with mild cognitive impairment as  
124 MCI stable, subjects diagnosed with Alzheimer’s dementia as  
125 AD, subjects progressing from NL to MCI as NL converters,  
126 and subjects progressing from MCI to AD as MCI converters.  
127 Amyloid concentration and glucose metabolism are respec-  
128 tively measured by (18)F-florbetapir Amyloid (AV45)-PET  
129 and (18)F-fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG)-PET imaging. Cognitive  
130 and functional abilities are assessed by the following neuro-  
131 psychological tests: Alzheimer’s Disease Assessment Scale  
132 (ADAS11), Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), Func-  
133 tional Assessment Questionnaire (FAQ), Rey Auditory Verbal  
134 Learning Test (RAVLT) immediate, and RAVLT forgetting.

135 **Study cohort and biomarkers’ changes across clinical**  
136 **groups.** Our study is based on a cohort of 311 amyloid  
137 positive individuals composed of 46 NL stable subjects, 10  
138 NL converters subjects, 106 subjects diagnosed with MCI,  
139 76 MCI converters subjects, and 73 AD patients. The term  
140 “amyloid positive” refers to subjects whose amyloid level in the  
141 cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) was below the nominal cutoff of 192  
142 pg/ml (35) either at baseline, or during any follow-up visit,  
143 and conversion to AD was determined using the last available  
144 follow-up information. The length of follow-up varies between  
145 subjects and goes from 0 to 6 years. Further information about  
146 the data are available on <https://adni.bitbucket.io/reference/>,  
147 while details on data acquisition and processing are provided  
148 in Section 1. We show in Table 1A socio-demographic  
149 information for the training cohort across the different clinical  
150 groups. Table 1B shows baseline values and annual rates of  
151 change across clinical groups for amyloid burden (average  
152 normalized AV45 uptake in frontal cortex, anterior cingulate,  
153 precuneus and parietal cortex), glucose hypometabolism  
154 (average normalized FDG uptake in frontal cortex, anterior  
155 cingulate, precuneus and parietal cortex), for hippocampal  
156 and medial temporal lobe volumes, and for the cognitive  
157 ability as measured by ADAS11. Compatibly with previously  
158 reported results (36, 37), we observe that while regional  
159 atrophy, hypometabolism and cognition show increasing  
160 rate of change when moving from healthy to pathological  
161 conditions, the change of AV45 is maximum in NL stable and  
162 MCI stable subjects. We also notice the increased magnitude  
163 of ADAS11 in AD as compared to the other clinical groups.  
164 Finally, the magnitude of change of FDG is generally milder  
165 than the atrophy rates.

166 The observations presented in Table 1 provide us with a glimpse  
167 into the biomarkers’ trajectories characterising AD. The com-  
168

**Table 1. A: Baseline socio-demographic information for training cohort (311 subjects for 2188 data points, follow-up from 0 to 6 years depending on subjects). Average values, standard deviation in parenthesis. B: Baseline values (bl) and annual rates of change (% change / year) of amyloid burden (average normalized AV45 uptake in frontal cortex, anterior cingulate, precuneus and parietal cortex), glucose hypometabolism (average normalized FDG uptake in frontal cortex, anterior cingulate, precuneus and parietal cortex), hippocampus volume, medial temporal lobe volume, and ADAS11 score for the different clinical groups. Median values, interquartile range below. The volumes of the hippocampus and the medial temporal lobe are averaged across left and right hemispheres. NL: healthy individuals, MCI: individuals with mild cognitive impairment, AD: patients with Alzheimer’s dementia. FDG: (18)F-fluorodeoxyglucose Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging. AV45: (18)F-florbetapir Amyloid PET imaging. SUVR: Standardized Uptake Value Ratio. MTL: Medial Temporal Lobe. ADAS11: Alzheimer’s Disease Assessment Scale-cognitive subscale, 11 items.**

A: Socio-demographics										
	NL stable		NL converters		MCI stable		MCI converters		AD	
N	46		10		106		76		73	
Age (yrs)	73 (7)		80 (4)		73 (6)		72 (6)		74 (8)	
Education (yrs)	17 (2)		15 (2)		16 (3)		16 (3)		16 (3)	
B: Biomarkers and rates of change										
	NL stable		NL converters		MCI stable		MCI converters		AD	
	bl	% change / year	bl	% change / year	bl	% change / year	bl	% change / year	bl	% change / year
Global AV45 (SUVR)	1.25 [1.16 ; 1.40]	1.7 [0.3 ; 2.6]	1.40 [1.26 ; 1.58]	-0.5 [-1.9 ; 1.1]	1.30 [1.21 ; 1.44]	1.5 [0.4 ; 2.6]	1.41 [1.29 ; 1.55]	0.1 [-1.4 ; 1.7]	1.42 [1.34 ; 1.54]	1.1 [-1.5 ; 2.5]
Global FDG (SUVR)	1.34 [1.27 ; 1.44]	-1.3 [-2.0 ; 0.8]	1.33 [1.27 ; 1.36]	-1.5 [-2.4 ; 0.9]	1.31 [1.24 ; 1.35]	-1.3 [-3.0 ; 0.0]	1.15 [1.07 ; 1.25]	-3.7 [-5.6 ; -1.6]	1.14 [1.07 ; 1.16]	-5.0 [-5.5 ; -1.3]
Hippocampus (ml)	3.9 [3.5 ; 4.1]	-1.6 [-2.9 ; -0.5]	3.5 [3.4 ; 3.6]	-0.4 [-2.7 ; -0.1]	3.4 [3.1 ; 3.8]	-2.5 [-3.7 ; -0.7]	3.3 [2.9 ; 3.5]	-3.8 [-5.3 ; -2.0]	2.9 [2.7 ; 3.3]	-5.1 [-8.0 ; -2.4]
MTL (ml)	10.4 [9.9 ; 11.1]	-0.8 [-2.0 ; 0.0]	9.7 [9.5 ; 9.8]	-2.2 [-6.5 ; -1.1]	10.1 [9.2 ; 11.0]	-1.1 [-2.2 ; 0.2]	9.5 [8.7 ; 10.7]	-3.0 [-5.3 ; -1.5]	8.5 [7.8 ; 9.8]	-5.9 [-7.9 ; -3.1]
ADAS11	5.5 [3.0 ; 7.8]	0.0 [-0.1 ; 0.4]	7.5 [6.0 ; 9.0]	0.7 [0.0 ; 1.6]	9.0 [6.0 ; 11.0]	1.1 [0.3 ; 3.2]	12.0 [9.0 ; 16.0]	5.2 [2.7 ; 10.3]	19.0 [15.0 ; 23.0]	7.8 [3.8 ; 17.8]

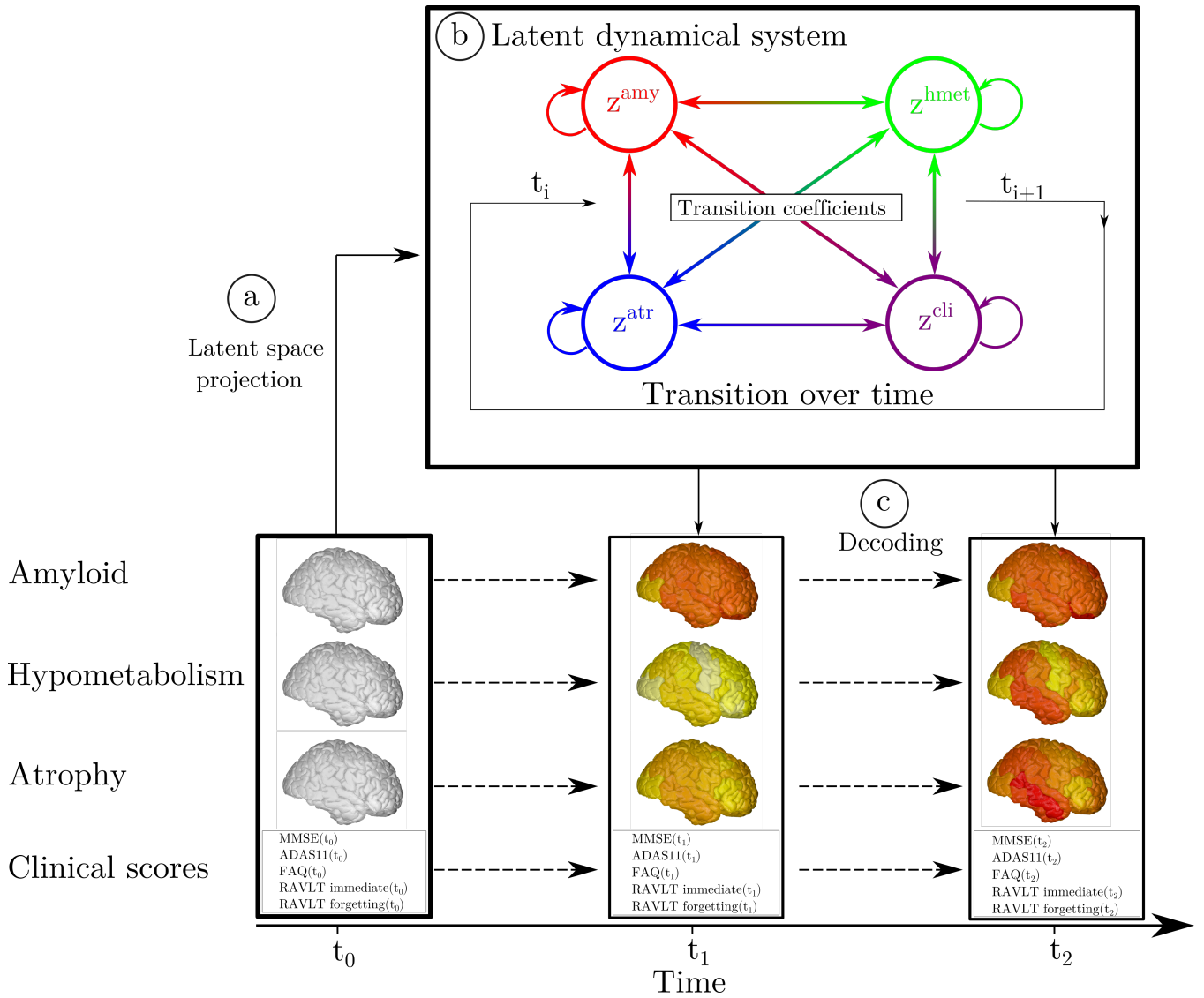
plexity of the dynamical changes we may infer is however limited, as the clinical stages roughly approximate a temporal scale describing the disease history, while very little insights can be obtained about the biomarkers’ interactions. Within this context, our model allows the quantification of the fine-grained dynamical relationships across biomarkers at stake during the history of the disease. Investigation of intervention scenarios can be subsequently carried out by opportunely modulating the estimated dynamics parameters according to specific intervention hypothesis (e.g. amyloid lowering at a certain time).

**Model overview.** We provide in Figure 1 an overview of the presented method. Baseline multi-modal imaging and clinical information for a given subject are transformed into a latent variable composed of four z-scores quantifying respectively the overall severity of atrophy, glucose hypometabolism, amyloid burden, and cognitive and functional assessment. The model estimates the dynamical relationships across these z-scores to optimally describe the temporal transitions between follow-up observations. These transition rules are here mathematically defined by the parameters of a system of ODEs, which is estimated from the data. This dynamical system allows to compute the evolution of the z-scores over time from any baseline observation, and to predict the associated multi-modal imaging and clinical measures. The model thus enables to simulate the pathological progression of biomarkers across the entire history of the disease. Once the model is estimated, we can modify the ODEs parameters to simulate different evolution scenarios according to specific hypothesis. For example, by reducing the parameters associated with the progression rate of amyloid, we can investigate the relative

change in the evolution of the other biomarkers. This setup thus provides us with a data-driven system enabling the exploration of hypothetical intervention strategies, and their effect on the pathological cascade.

In the following sections, MRI, FDG-PET, and AV45-PET images are processed in order to respectively extract regional gray matter density, glucose hypometabolism and amyloid load from a brain parcellation. The z-scores of gray matter atrophy ( $z^{atr}$ ), glucose hypometabolism ( $z^{hmet}$ ), and amyloid burden ( $z^{amy}$ ), are computed using the measures obtained by this pre-processing step. The clinical z-score  $z^{cli}$  is derived from neuro-psychological scores: ADAS11, MMSE, FAQ, RAVLT immediate, and RAVLT forgetting. Further details about experimental setup, method formulation, and data pre-processing are given in Section .

**Progression model and latent relationships.** We show in Figure 2 Panel I) the dynamical relationships across the different z-scores estimated by the model, where direction and intensity of the arrows quantify the estimated increase of one variable with respect to the other. Being the scores adimensional, they have been conveniently rescaled to the range [0,1] indicating increasing pathological levels. These relationships extend the summary statistics reported in Table 1 to a much finer temporal scale and wider range of possible biomarkers’ values. We observe in Figure 2A, 2B and 2C that large values of the amyloid score  $z^{amy}$  trigger the increase of the remaining ones:  $z^{hmet}$ ,  $z^{atr}$ , and  $z^{cli}$ . Figure 2D shows that large increase of the atrophy score  $z^{atr}$  is associated to higher hypometabolism indicated by large values of  $z^{hmet}$ . Moreover, we note that high  $z^{hmet}$  values also



**Fig. 1.** Overview of the method. a) High-dimensional multi-modal measures are projected into a 4-dimensional latent space. Each data modality is transformed in a corresponding z-score  $z^{amy}$ ,  $z^{hmet}$ ,  $z^{atr}$ ,  $z^{cli}$ . b) The dynamical system describing the relationships between the z-scores allows to compute their transition across the evolution of the disease. c) Given the latent space and the estimated dynamics, the follow-up measurements can be reconstructed to match the observed data.

231 contribute to an increase of  $z^{cli}$  (Figure 2E). Finally, Figure  
232 2F shows that high atrophy values lead to an increase mostly  
233 along the clinical dimension  $z^{cli}$ . This chain of relation-  
234 ships is in agreement with the cascade hypothesis of AD (2, 3).  
235

236 Relying on the dynamical relationships shown in Figure  
237 2 Panel I), starting from any initial set of biomarkers  
238 values we can estimate the relative trajectories over time.  
239 Figure 2 Panel II) (left), shows the evolution obtained by  
240 extrapolating backward and forward in time the trajectory  
241 associated to the z-scores of the AD group. The x-axis  
242 represents the years from conversion to AD, where the  
243 instant  $t=0$  corresponds to the average time of diagnosis  
244 estimated for the group of MCI progressing to dementia.  
245 As observed in Figure 2 Panel I) and Table 1, the amyloid  
246 score  $z^{amy}$  increases and saturates first, followed by  $z^{hmet}$   
247 and  $z^{atr}$  scores whose progression slows down when reaching  
248 clinical conversion, while the clinical score exhibits strong  
249 acceleration in the latest progression stages. Figure 2 Panel  
250 II) (right) shows the group-wise distribution of the disease  
251 severity estimated for each subject relatively to the modelled  
252 long-term latent trajectories (Section Evaluating disease  
253 severity). The group-wise difference of disease severity across  
254 groups is statistically significant and increases when going  
255 from healthy to pathological stages (Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney  
256 test  $p < 0.001$  for each comparisons). The reliability of the  
257 estimation of disease severity was further assessed through  
258 testing on an independent cohort, and by comparison with  
259 a previously proposed disease progression modeling method  
260 from the state-of-the-art (25). The results are provided in  
261 section 1 of the Supplementary Material and show positive  
262 generalization results as well as a favourable comparison with  
263 the benchmark method.  
264

265 From the z-score trajectories of Figure 2 Panel II) (left) we  
266 predict the progression of imaging and clinical measures shown  
267 in Figure 3. We observe that amyloid load globally increases  
268 and saturates early, compatibly with the positive amyloid  
269 condition of the study cohort. Glucose hypometabolism and  
270 gray matter atrophy increase are delayed with respect to  
271 amyloid, and tend to map prevalently temporal and parietal  
272 regions. Finally, the clinical measures exhibit a non-linear  
273 pattern of change, accelerating during the latest progression  
274 stages. These dynamics are compatible with the summary  
275 measures on the raw data reported in Table 1. Finally, the  
276 estimated progression of the RAVLT immediate and RAVLT  
277 forgetting is provided in Figure S3 of the Supplementary  
278 Material.  
279

280 **Simulating clinical intervention.** This experimental section  
281 is based on two intervention scenarios: a first one in which  
282 amyloid is lowered by 100%, and a second one in which it  
283 is reduced by 50% with respect to the estimated natural  
284 progression. In Figure 4 we show the latent z-scores evolution  
285 resulting from either 100% or 50% amyloid lowering performed  
286 at the time  $t = -12.5$  years. According to these scenarios,  
287 intervention results in a sensitive reduction of the pathological  
288 progression for atrophy, hypometabolism and clinical scores,  
289 albeit with a stronger effect in case of total blockage.  
290

291 We further estimated the resulting clinical endpoints associ-

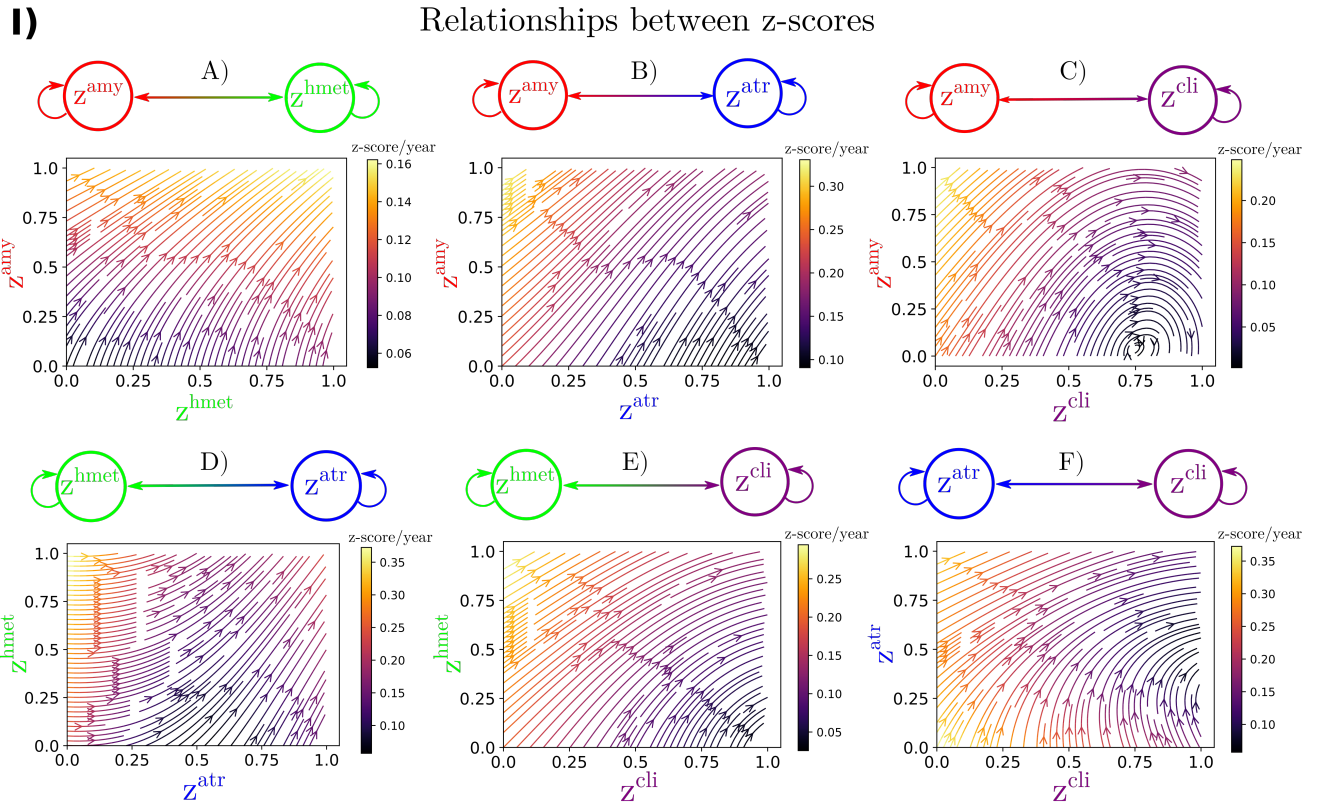
292 ated with the two amyloid lowering scenarios, at increasing  
293 time points and for different sample sizes. Clinical endpoints  
294 consisted in the simulated ADAS11, MMSE, and FAQ at  
295 the reference conversion time ( $t=0$ ). The case placebo  
296 indicates the scenario where clinical values were computed  
297 at conversion time from the estimated natural progression  
298 shown in Figure 2 Panel II) (left). Figure 5 shows the change  
299 in statistical power depending on intervention time and  
300 sample sizes. For large sample sizes (1000 subjects per arm)  
301 a power greater than 0.8 can be obtained around 5 years  
302 before conversion, depending on the outcome score. When  
303 sample size is lower than 100 subjects per arm, a power  
304 greater than 0.8 is reached if intervention is performed at  
305 the latest 8 years before conversion, with a mild variability  
306 depending on the considered clinical score. We notice that  
307 in the case of a 50% amyloid lowering, in order to reach the  
308 same power intervention needs to be consistently performed  
309 earlier compared to the scenario of 100% amyloid lowering  
310 for the same sample size and clinical score. For instance, if  
311 we consider ADAS11 with a sample size of 100 subjects per  
312 arm, a power of 0.8 is obtained for a 100% amyloid lowering  
313 intervention performed 8 years before conversion, while in  
314 case of a 50% amyloid lowering the equivalent effect would be  
315 obtained by intervening 10.5 years before conversion. Finally,  
316 we also provide in Figure S4 of the Supplementary Material  
317 the power analysis for the RAVLT immediate and RAVLT  
318 forgetting.  
319

320 We provide in Table 2 the estimated improvement for ADAS11,  
321 MMSE, and FAQ at conversion with a sample size of 100  
322 subjects per arm for both 100% and 50% amyloid lowering de-  
323 pending on the intervention time. The estimated improvement  
324 for RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting is provided in  
325 Table S2 in the Supplementary Material. We observe that for  
326 the same intervention time, 100% amyloid lowering always  
327 results in a larger improvement of clinical endpoints compared  
328 to 50% amyloid lowering. We also note that in the case of  
329 100% lowering, clinical endpoints obtained for intervention at  
330  $t=-10$  years correspond to typical cutoff values for inclusion  
331 into AD trials (ADAS11=  $13.4 \pm 6.2$ , MMSE=  $25.8 \pm 2.5$ , see  
332 Table S3 in Supplementary Material) (39, 40).  
333

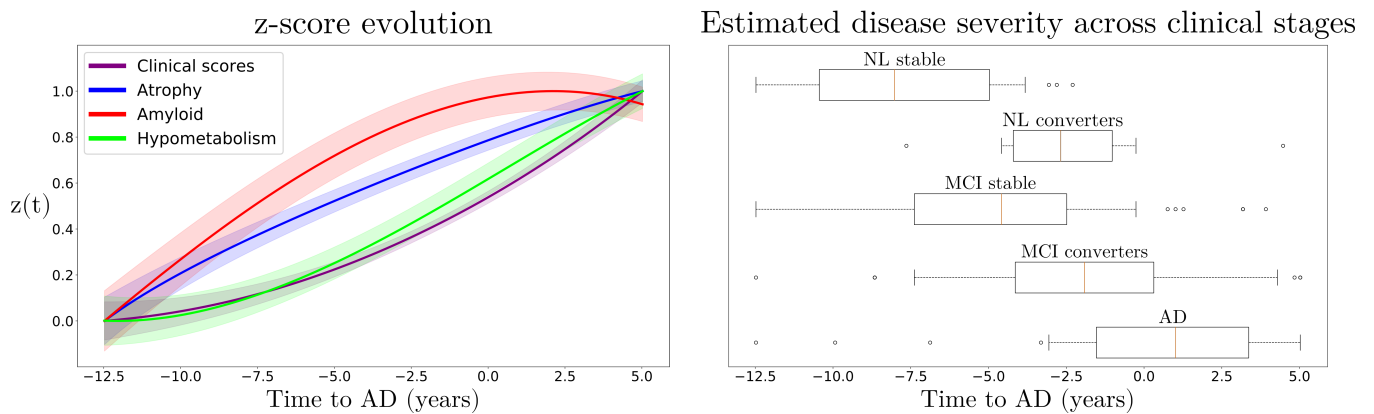
## 333 Discussion

334 We presented a framework to jointly model the progression  
335 of multi-modal imaging and clinical data, based on the  
336 estimation of latent biomarkers' relationships governing AD  
337 progression. The model is designed to simulate intervention  
338 scenarios in clinical trials, and in this study we focused on  
339 assessing the effect of anti-amyloid drugs on biomarkers'  
340 evolution, by quantifying the effect of intervention time and  
341 drug efficacy on clinical outcomes. Our results underline the  
342 critical importance of intervention time, which should be  
343 performed sensibly early during the pathological history to  
344 effectively appreciate the effectiveness of disease modifiers.  
345

346 The results obtained with our model are compatible with  
347 findings reported in recent clinical studies (11–13). For  
348 example, if we consider 500 patients per arm and perform a  
349 100% amyloid lowering intervention for 2 years to reproduce  
350 the conditions of the recent trial of Verubecestat (12), the  
351 average improvement of MMSE predicted by our model is of

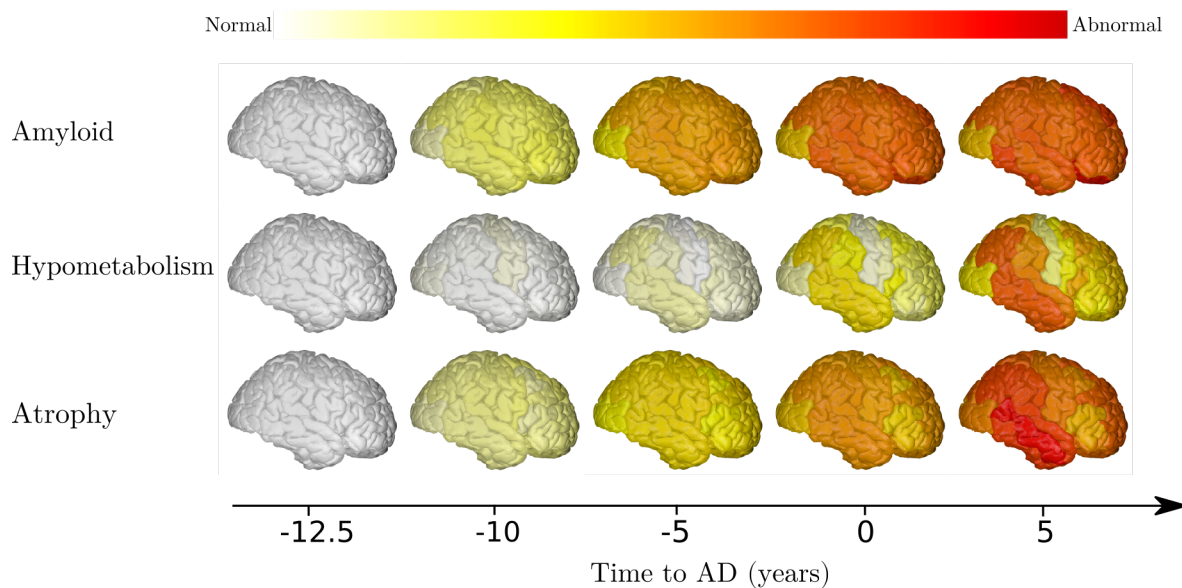


**II)**

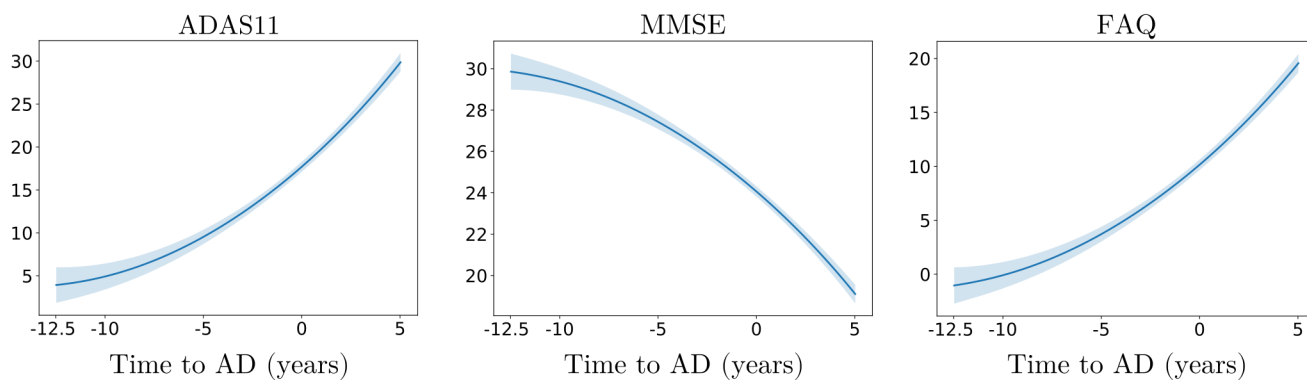


**Fig. 2.** Panel I: Estimated dynamical relationships across the different z-scores (A to F). Given the values of two z-scores, the arrow at the corresponding coordinates indicates how one score evolves with respect to the other. The intensity of the arrow gives the strength of the relationship between the two scores. Panel II, left: Estimated long-term latent dynamics (time is relative to conversion to Alzheimer's dementia). Shaded areas represent the standard deviation of the average trajectory. Panel II, right: Distribution of the estimated disease severity across clinical stages, relative to the long-term dynamics on the left. NL: normal individuals, MCI: mild cognitive impairment, AD: Alzheimer's dementia.

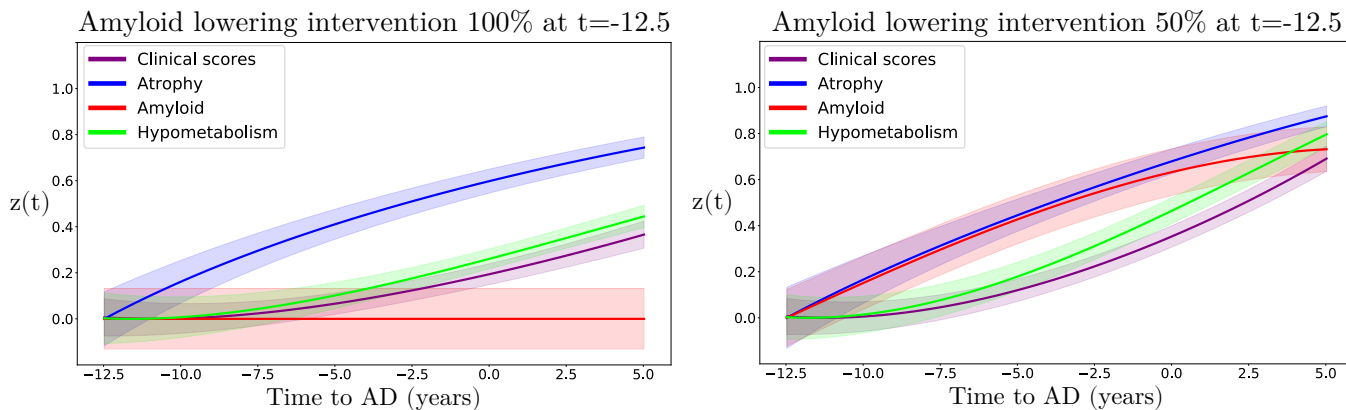
## Imaging evolution



## Clinical outcomes evolution

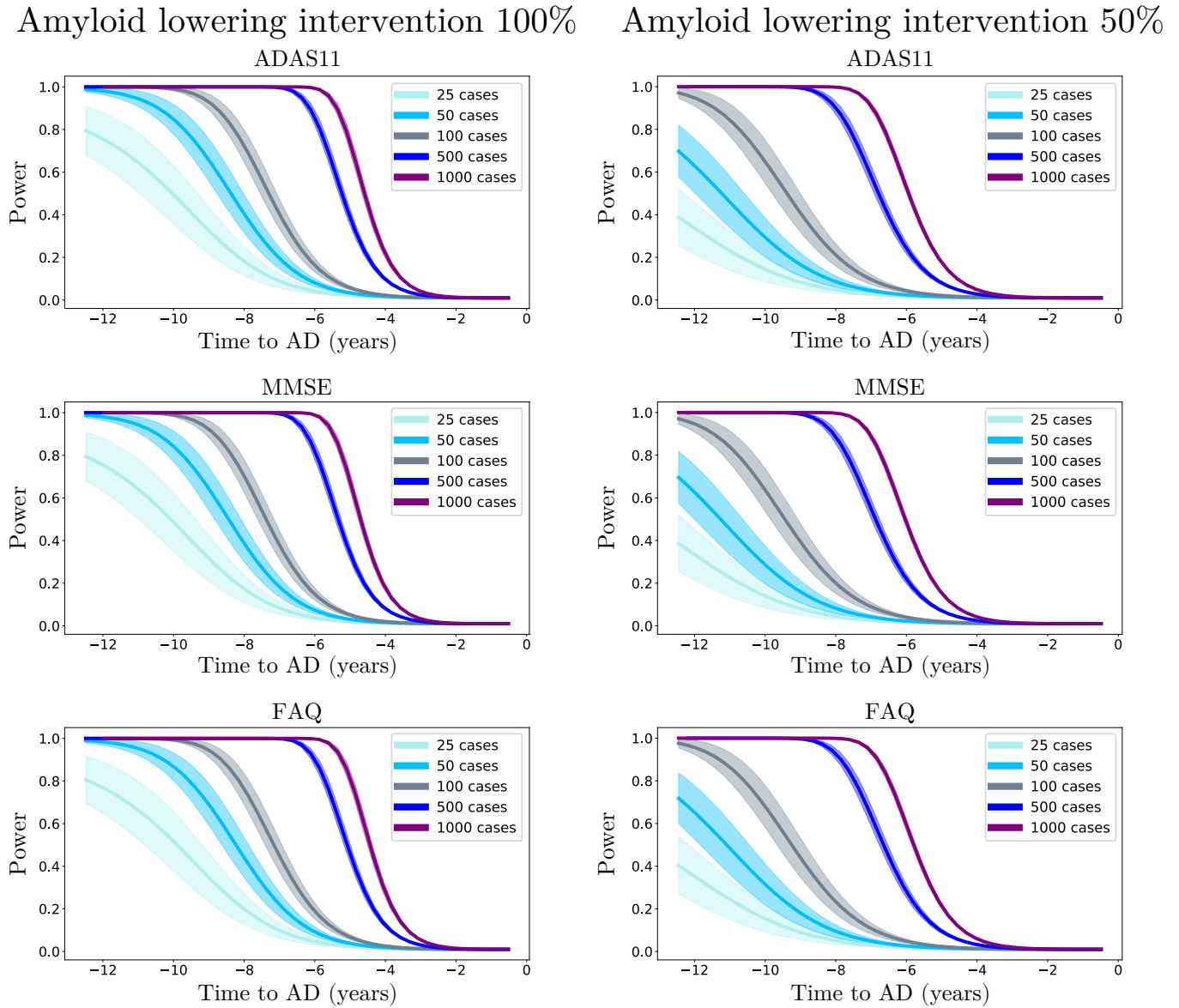


**Fig. 3.** Modelled long-term evolution of cortical measurements for the different types of imaging markers, and clinical scores. Shaded areas represent the standard deviation of the average trajectory. Brain images were generated using the software provided in (38).



**Fig. 4.** Hypothetical scenarios of irreversible amyloid lowering interventions at  $t = -12.5$  years from Alzheimer's dementia diagnosis, with a rate of 100 % (left) or 50 % (right). Shaded areas represent the standard deviation of the average trajectory.





**Fig. 5.** Statistical power of the Student t-test comparing the estimated clinical outcomes at conversion time between placebo and treated scenarios, according to the year of simulated intervention (100% and 50% amyloid lowering) and sample size.

**Table 2. Estimated mean (standard deviation) improvement of clinical outcomes at predicted conversion time for the normal progression case by year of simulated intervention (100% and 50% amyloid lowering interventions). Results in bold indicate a statistically significant difference between placebo and treated scenarios ( $p < 0.01$ , two-sided t-test, 100 cases per arm). AD: Alzheimer’s dementia, ADAS11: Alzheimer’s Disease Assessment Scale, MMSE: Mini-Mental State Examination, FAQ: Functional Assessment Questionnaire.**

<b>Amyloid lowering intervention 100%</b>								
Point improvement per intervention time								
Years to AD Score	−12.5	−10	−7.5	−5	−4	−3	−2	−1
ADAS11	<b>7.0 (4.8)</b>	<b>4.3 (2.8)</b>	<b>2.0 (1.4)</b>	0.7 (0.5)	0.4 (0.3)	0.2 (0.2)	0.1 (0.1)	0.01 (0.01)
MMSE	<b>2.8 (1.9)</b>	<b>1.8 (1.1)</b>	<b>0.9 (0.6)</b>	0.3 (0.2)	0.2 (0.1)	0.1 (0.06)	0.02 (0.02)	0.0 (0.0)
FAQ	<b>5.5 (3.8)</b>	<b>3.4 (2.3)</b>	<b>1.7 (1.1)</b>	0.6 (0.5)	0.4 (0.3)	0.2 (0.2)	0.1 (0.1)	0.01 (0.01)

<b>Amyloid lowering intervention 50%</b>								
Point improvement per intervention time								
Years to AD Score	−12.5	−10	−7.5	−5	−4	−3	−2	−1
ADAS11	<b>3.5 (2.4)</b>	<b>2.1 (1.4)</b>	1.0 (0.7)	0.4 (0.3)	0.2 (0.2)	0.1 (0.1)	0.04 (0.03)	0.0 (0.0)
MMSE	<b>1.4 (1.0)</b>	<b>0.9 (0.6)</b>	0.4 (0.3)	0.1 (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)	0.03 (0.02)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
FAQ	<b>2.8 (1.9)</b>	<b>1.7 (1.1)</b>	0.8 (0.5)	0.3 (0.2)	0.2 (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)	0.03 (0.03)	0.0 (0.0)

0.02, falling in the 95% confidence interval measured during that study ([-0.5 ; 0.8]). While recent anti-amyloid trials such as (11–13) included between 500 and 1000 mild AD subjects per arm and were conducted over a period of two years at most, our analysis suggests that clinical trials performed with less than 1000 subjects with mild AD may be consistently under-powered. Indeed, we see in Figure 5 that with a sample size of 1000 subjects per arm and a total blockage of amyloid production, a power of 0.8 can be obtained only if intervention is performed at least 5 years before conversion.

These results allow to quantify the crucial role of intervention time, and provide an experimental justification for testing amyloid modifying drugs in the pre-clinical stage (15, 41). This is for example illustrated in Table 2, in which we notice that clinical endpoints are close to placebo even when the simulated intervention takes place up to 5 years before conversion, while stronger cognitive and functional changes happen when amyloid is lowered by 100% or 50% at least 10 years before conversion. These findings may be explained by considering that amyloid accumulates over more than a decade, and that when amyloid clearance occurs the pathological cascade is already entrenched (42). Our results are thus supporting the need to identify subjects at the pre-clinical stage, that is to say still cognitively normal, which is a challenging task. Currently, one of the main criteria to enroll subjects into clinical trials is the presence of amyloid in the brain, and blood-based markers are considered as potential candidates for identifying patients at risk for AD (43). Moreover, recent works such as (44, 45) have proposed more complex entry criteria to constitute cohorts based on multi-modal measurements. Within this context, our model could also be used as an enrichment tool by quantifying the disease severity based on multi-modal data as shown in Figure 2 Panel II) (right). Similarly, the method could be applied to predict the evolution of single patient given its current available measurements.

An additional critical aspect of anti-amyloid trials is the effect of dose exposure on the production of amyloid (16). Currently,  $\beta$ -site amyloid precursor protein cleaving enzyme (BACE) inhibitors allow to suppress amyloid production from 50% to 90%. In this study we showed that lowering amyloid by 50% consistently decreases the treatment effect compared to a 100% lowering at the same time. For instance, if we consider a sample size of 1000 subjects per arm in the case of a 50% amyloid lowering intervention, an 80% power can be reached only 6.5 years before conversion instead of 5 years for a 100% amyloid lowering intervention. This ability of our model to control the rate of amyloid progression is fundamental in order to provide realistic simulations of anti-amyloid trials.

In Figure 2 Panel I) we showed that amyloid triggers the pathological cascade affecting the other markers, thus confirming its dominating role on disease progression. Assuming that the data used to estimate the model is sufficient to completely depict the history of the pathology, our model can be interpreted from a causal perspective. However, we cannot exclude the existence of other mechanisms driving amyloid accumulation, which our model cannot infer from the existing data. Therefore, our findings should be considered with care, while the integration of additional biomarkers of interest will be necessary to account for multiple drivers of the disease. It is worth noting that recent works ventured the idea to combine drugs targeting multiple mechanisms at the same time (46). For instance, pathologists have shown tau deposition in brainstem nuclei in adolescents and children (47), and clinicians are currently investigating the pathological effect of early tau spreading on AD progression (48), raising crucial questions about its relationship with amyloid accumulation, and the impact on cognitive impairment (49). Our model would allow to address these questions by including measures derived from Tau-PET images, and simulating scenarios of production blockage of both proteins at different rates or

intervention time.

Lately, disappointing results of clinical studies led to hypothesize specific treatments targeting AD sub-populations based on their genotype (50). While in our work we describe a global progression of AD, in the future we will account for sub-trajectories due to genetic factors (51), such as the presence of  $\epsilon 4$  allele of apolipoprotein (APOE4), which is a major risk for developing AD influencing both disease onset and progression (52). This could be done by estimating dynamical systems specific to the genetic condition of each patient. Simulating the dynamical relationships specific to genetic factors would allow to evaluate the effect of APOE4 on intervention time or drug dosage. In addition, there exist numerous non-genetic aggravating factors that may also affect disease evolution, such as diabetes, obesity or smoking. Extending our model to account for panels of risk factors would ultimately allow to test in silico personalized intervention strategies. Moreover, a key aspect of clinical trials is their economic cost. Our model could be extended to help designing clinical trials by optimizing intervention with respect to the available funding. Given a budget, we could simulate scenarios based on different sample size, and trials duration, while estimating the expected cognitive outcome.

Results presented in this work are based on a model estimated by relying solely on a subset of the ADNI cohort, and therefore they may not be fully representative of the general AD progression. Indeed, subjects included in this cohort were either amyloid-positive at baseline, or became amyloid-positive during their follow-up visits (see Section Study cohort and biomarkers' changes across clinical groups). They may therefore provide a limited representation of the pathological temporal window captured by the model. Applying the model on a cohort containing amyloid-negative subjects may provide additional insights on the overall disease history. However, this is a challenging task as it would require to identify sub-trajectories dissociated from normal ageing (53, 54). In addition to this specific characteristic of the cohort, there exists additional biases impacting the model estimation. For instance, the fact that gray matter atrophy becomes abnormal before glucose metabolism in Figure 3 can be explained by the generally high atrophy rate of change in some key regions in normal elders, such as in the hippocampus, compared to the rate of change of FDG (see Table 1). We note that this stronger change of atrophy with respect to glucose hypometabolism can already be appreciated in the clinically healthy group. The existence of such biases can also be observed in Figure 4, in which we notice that atrophy is less affected by intervention, implying that its evolution is here importantly decorrelated from amyloid burden.

## Materials and Methods

**Data acquisition and preprocessing.** Data used in the preparation of this article were obtained from the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI) database (adni.loni.usc.edu).

We considered four types of biomarkers, related to clinical scores, gray matter atrophy, amyloid load and glucose hypometabolism, and respectively denoted by *cli*, *atr*, *amy* and *hmet*. MRI images

were processed following the longitudinal pipeline of Freesurfer (55), to obtain gray matter volumes in a standard anatomical space. AV45-PET and FDG-PET images were aligned to the closest MRI in time, and normalized to the cerebellum uptake. Regional gray matter density, amyloid load and glucose hypometabolism were extracted from the Desikan-Killiany parcellation (56). We discarded white-matter, ventricular, and cerebellar regions, thus obtaining 82 regions that were averaged across hemispheres. Therefore, for a given subject,  $\mathbf{x}^{atr}$ ,  $\mathbf{x}^{amy}$  and  $\mathbf{x}^{hmet}$  are respectively 41-dimensional vectors. The variable  $\mathbf{x}^{cli}$  is composed of the neuro-psychological scores ADAS11, MMSE, RAVLT immediate, RAVLT forgetting and FAQ. The total number of measures is of 2188 longitudinal data points. We note that the model requires all the measures to be available at baseline in order to obtain a latent representation, but is able to handle missing data in the follow-up. Further details on the cohort are given in Section .

**Data modelling.** We consider observations  $\mathbf{X}_i(t) = [\mathbf{x}_i^1(t), \mathbf{x}_i^2(t), \dots, \mathbf{x}_i^M(t)]^T$ , which correspond to multivariate measures derived from  $M$  different modalities (e.g clinical scores, MRI, AV45, or FDG measures) at time  $t$  for subject  $i$ . Each vector  $\mathbf{x}_i^m(t)$  has dimension  $D_m$ . We postulate the following generative model, in which the modalities are assumed to be independently generated by a common latent representation of the data  $\mathbf{z}_i(t)$ :

$$\begin{aligned} p(\mathbf{X}_i(t)|\mathbf{z}_i(t), \sigma^2, \psi) &= \prod_m p(\mathbf{x}_i^m(t)|\mathbf{z}_i(t), \sigma_m^2, \psi_m) \\ &= \prod_m \mathcal{N}(\mu_m(\mathbf{z}_i(t), \psi_m), \sigma_m^2), \\ \mathbf{z}_i(t) &= \Lambda(\mathbf{z}_i(t_0), t), \\ \mathbf{z}_i(t_0) &\sim p(\mathbf{z}_i(t_0)), \end{aligned} \quad [1]$$

where  $\sigma_m^2$  is measurement noise, while  $\psi_m$  are the parameters of the function  $\mu_m$  which maps the latent state to the data space for the modality  $m$ . For simplicity of notation we denote  $\mathbf{z}_i(t)$  by  $\mathbf{z}(t)$ . We assume that each coordinate of  $\mathbf{z}$  is associated to a specific modality  $m$ , leading to an  $M$ -dimensional latent space. The  $\Lambda$  operator which gives the value of the latent representation at a given time  $t$ , is defined by the solution of the following system of ODEs:

$$\frac{dz^m(t)}{dt} = k_m z^m(t)(1 - z^m(t)) + \sum_{j \neq m} \alpha_{m,j} z^j(t), \quad m=1, \dots, M. \quad [2]$$

For each coordinate, the first term of the equation enforces a sigmoidal evolution with a progression rate  $k_m$ , while the second term accounts for the relationship between modalities  $m$  and  $j$  through the parameters  $\alpha_{m,j}$ . This system can be rewritten as:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\mathbf{z}(t)}{dt} &= \mathbf{W}\mathbf{z}(t) - \mathbf{V}\mathbf{z}^2(t) = g(\mathbf{z}(t), \theta_{ODE}) \text{ where,} \\ \left( \mathbf{W}_{i,j} \right) &= \begin{cases} k_i & \text{if } i=j, \\ \alpha_{i,j} & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases} \quad \text{and} \quad \left( \mathbf{V}_{i,j} \right) = \begin{cases} k_i & \text{if } i=j \\ 0 & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \end{aligned} \quad [3]$$

$\theta_{ODE}$  denotes the parameters of the system of ODEs, which correspond to the entries of the matrices  $\mathbf{W}$  and  $\mathbf{V}$ . According to Equation 3, for each initial condition  $\mathbf{z}(0)$ , the latent state at time  $t$  can be computed through integration,  $\mathbf{z}(t) = \mathbf{z}(0) + \int_0^t g(\mathbf{z}(x), \theta_{ODE}) dx$ .

**Variational inference.** We rewrite  $p(\mathbf{X}_i(t)|\mathbf{z}_i(t), \sigma^2, \psi)$  as  $p(\mathbf{X}_i(t)|\mathbf{z}_i(t_0), \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi)$ . Assuming independence between subjects, the marginal log-likelihood writes as:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L} &= \sum_i^N \log [p(\mathbf{X}_i(t)|\theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi)] \\ &= \sum_i^N \log \left[ \int p(\mathbf{X}_i(t)|\mathbf{z}_i(t_0), \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) p(\mathbf{z}_i(t_0)) d\mathbf{z}_i(t_0) \right]. \end{aligned} \quad [4]$$

521 For ease of notation, we drop the  $i$  index, and dependence on  $t$   
 522 and  $t_0$  is made implicit. Within a Bayesian framework, we wish  
 523 to maximize  $\mathcal{L}$  in order to obtain a posterior distribution for the  
 524 latent variable  $\mathbf{z}$ . Since derivation of this quantity is generally not  
 525 tractable, we resort to stochastic variational inference to tackle the  
 526 optimization problem. We assume a  $\mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{I})$  prior for  $p(\mathbf{z})$ , and  
 527 introduce an approximate posterior distribution  $q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})$  (57), in  
 528 order to derive a lower-bound  $\mathcal{E}$  for the marginal log-likelihood:

$$\begin{aligned} \log p(\mathbf{X}|\theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) &\geq \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) \right] \\ &\quad - \mathcal{D} \left[ q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X}) | p(\mathbf{z}) \right] \\ &= \mathcal{E}, \end{aligned} \quad [5]$$

where  $\mathcal{D}$  refers to the Kullback-Leibler (KL) divergence. We propose to factorize the distribution  $q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})$  across modalities such that,  $q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X}) = \prod_m q(z^m|\mathbf{x}^m)$ , where  $q(z^m|\mathbf{x}^m) = \mathcal{N}(f(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^1), h(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^2))$ , is a variational Gaussian approximation with moments parameterized by the functions  $f$  and  $h$ . This modality-wise encoding of the data enables to interpret each coordinate of  $\mathbf{z}$  as a compressed representation of the corresponding modality. Moreover, the lower-bound simplifies as:

$$\mathcal{E} = \sum_m \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{x}^m|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma_m^2, \psi_m) \right] - \mathcal{D} \left[ q(z^m|\mathbf{x}^m) | p(z^m) \right] \quad [6]$$

529 Details about the ELBO derivation and the computation of the KL  
 530 divergence are given in the Supplementary Material. A graphical  
 531 model of the method is also provided in Figure S5, while Supplement-  
 532 ary Algorithm 1 details the steps to compute the ELBO.

533 **Model optimization.** Using the reparameterization trick (58), we can  
 534 efficiently sample from the posterior distribution  $q(\mathbf{z}(t_0)|\mathbf{X}(t_0))$   
 535 to approximate the expectation terms. Moreover, thanks to our  
 536 choices of priors and approximations the KL terms can be computed  
 537 in closed-form. In practice, we sample from  $q(\mathbf{z}(t_0)|\mathbf{X}(t_0))$  to  
 538 obtain a latent representation  $\mathbf{z}(t_0)$  at baseline, while the follow-up  
 539 points are estimated by decoding the latent time-series obtained  
 540 through the integration of the ODEs of Eq 3. The model is  
 541 trained by computing the total ELBO for all the subjects at all  
 542 the available time points. The parameters  $\psi, \phi^1, \phi^2, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma$   
 543 are optimized using gradient descent, which requires to backpropagate  
 544 through the integration operation.

545 In order to enable backpropagation through the ODEs integration  
 546 we need to numerically solve the differential equation using only  
 547 operations that can be differentiated. In this work, we used the  
 548 Midpoint method which follows a second order Runge-Kutta scheme.  
 549 The method consists in evaluating the derivative of the solution at  
 550  $(t_{i+1} + t_i)/2$ , which is the midpoint between  $t_i$  at which the correct  
 551  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  is evaluated, and the following  $t_{i+1}$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{t_i}^{t_{i+1}} g(\mathbf{z}(x)) dx &\approx h \cdot g \left( \mathbf{z} \left( \frac{t_i + t_{i+1}}{2} \right) \right) \\ &\approx h \cdot g \left( \mathbf{z}(t_i) + \frac{h}{2} g(\mathbf{z}(t_i)) \right), \quad h = t_{i+1} - t_i. \end{aligned} \quad [7]$$

553 Therefore, solving the system of Equation 3 on the interval  
 554  $[t_0, \dots, t]$  only requires operations that can be differentiated,  
 555 allowing to compute the derivatives of the ELBO with respect  
 556 to all the parameters, and to optimize them by gradient descent.  
 557 Moreover, in order to control the variability of the estimated  
 558 latent trajectory  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  due to the error propagation during  
 559 integration, we initialized the weights of  $\phi^1$  and  $\phi^2$  such that  
 560 the approximate posterior of the latent representation for each  
 561 modality  $m$  at baseline was following a  $\mathcal{N}(0, 0.01)$  distribution.  
 562 Finally, we also tested other ODE solvers such as Runge-Kutta  
 563 4, which gave similar results than the Midpoint method with a  
 564 slower execution time due its more expensive approximation scheme.  
 565

Concerning the implementation, we trained the model using the  
 ADAM optimizer (59) with a learning rate of 0.01. The functions  
 $f, h$  and  $\mu_m$  were parameterized as linear transformations. The  
 model was implemented in Pytorch (60), and we used the *torchdiffeq*  
 package developed in (61) to backpropagate through the ODE solver.

**Simulating the long-term progression of AD.** To simulate the long-  
 term progression of AD we first project the AD cohort in the latent  
 space via the encoding functions. We can subsequently follow the  
 trajectories of these subjects backward and forward in time, in  
 order to estimate the associated trajectory from the healthy to their  
 respective pathological condition. In practice, a Gaussian Mixture  
 Model is used to fit the empirical distribution of the AD subjects'  
 latent projection. The number of components and covariance type of  
 the GMM is selected by relying on the Akaike information criterion  
 (62). The fitted GMM allows us to sample pathological latent  
 representations  $\mathbf{z}_i(t_0)$ , that can be integrated forward and backward  
 in time thanks to the estimated set of latent ODEs, to finally obtain a  
 collection of latent trajectories  $\mathbf{Z}(t) = [\mathbf{z}_1(t), \dots, \mathbf{z}_N(t)]$  summarising  
 the distribution of the long-term AD evolution.

**Simulating intervention.** In this section we assume that we computed  
 the average latent progression of the disease  $\mathbf{z}(t)$ . Thanks to the  
 modality-wise encoding of Section 1 each coordinate of the latent  
 representation can be interpreted as representing a single data  
 modality. Therefore, we propose to simulate the effect of an hypo-  
 theoretical intervention on the disease progression, by modulating the  
 vector  $\frac{dz(t)}{dt}$  after each integration step such that:

$$\left( \frac{dz(t)}{dt} \right)^* = \mathbf{\Gamma} \frac{dz(t)}{dt} \quad \text{where, } \mathbf{\Gamma} = \begin{pmatrix} \gamma_1 & & \\ & \ddots & \\ & & \gamma_m \end{pmatrix}. \quad [8]$$

The values  $\gamma_m$  are fixed between 0 and 1, allowing to control the  
 influence of the corresponding modalities on the system evolution,  
 and to create hypothetical scenarios of evolution. For example, for  
 a 100% (resp. 50%) amyloid lowering intervention we set  $\gamma_{amy} = 0$   
 (resp.  $\gamma_{amy} = 0.5$ ).

**Evaluating disease severity.** Given an evolution  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  describing the  
 disease progression in the latent space, we propose to consider  
 this trajectory as a reference and to use it in order to quantify  
 the individual disease severity of a subject  $\mathbf{X}$ . This is done by  
 estimating a time-shift  $\tau$  defined as:

$$\begin{aligned} \tau &= \arg \min_t \|f(\mathbf{X}, \phi^1) - \mathbf{z}(t)\|_1 \\ &= \sum_m |f(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi^1) - z^m(t)|. \end{aligned} \quad [9]$$

This time-shift allows to quantify the pathological stage of a subject  
 with respect to the disease progression along the reference trajectory  
 $\mathbf{z}(t)$ . Moreover, the time-shift can still be estimated even in the case  
 of missing data modalities, by only encoding the available measures  
 of the observed subject.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** This work has been supported by  
 the French government, through the UCA<sup>JEDI</sup> and 3IA Côte  
 d'Azur Investments in the Future project managed by the National  
 Research Agency (ref.n ANR-15-IDEX-01 and ANR-19-P3IA-0002),  
 the grant AAP Santé 06 2017-260 DGA-DSH, and by the Inria  
 Sophia-Antipolis-Méditerranée, "NEF" computation cluster.

Data collection and sharing for this project was funded by the  
 Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI) and DOD  
 ADNI. ADNI is funded by the National Institute on Aging, the  
 National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering,  
 and through generous contributions from the following: AbbVie,  
 Alzheimer's Association; Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation;  
 Araclon Biotech; BioClinica, Inc.; Biogen; Bristol-Myers Squibb  
 Company; CereSpir, Inc.; Cogstate; Eisai Inc.; Elan Pharmaceuticals,  
 Inc.; Eli Lilly and Company; EuroImmun; F. Hoffmann-La Roche

618 Ltd and its affiliated company Genentech, Inc.; Fujirebio; GE Health- 700  
619 care; IXICO Ltd.; Janssen Alzheimer Immunotherapy Research & 701  
620 Development, LLC.; Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical Research 702  
621 & Development LLC.; Lumosity; Lundbeck; Merck & Co., Inc.; Meso 703  
622 Scale Diagnostics, LLC.; NeuroRx Research; Neurotrack Technolo- 704  
623 gies; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; Pfizer Inc.; Piramal 705  
624 Imaging; Servier; Takeda Pharmaceutical Company; and Transition 706  
625 Therapeutics. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is provid- 707  
626 ing funds to support ADNI clinical sites in Canada. Private sector 708  
627 contributions are facilitated by the Foundation for the National 709  
628 Institutes of Health (www.fnih.org). The grantee organization is 710  
629 the Northern California Institute for Research and Education, and 711  
630 the study is coordinated by the Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research 712  
631 Institute at the University of Southern California. ADNI data are 713  
632 disseminated by the Laboratory for Neuro Imaging at the University 714  
633 of Southern California. 715

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1

## 2 **Supplementary Information for**

### 3 **Simulating the outcome of amyloid treatments in Alzheimer's Disease from multi-modal** 4 **imaging and clinical data**

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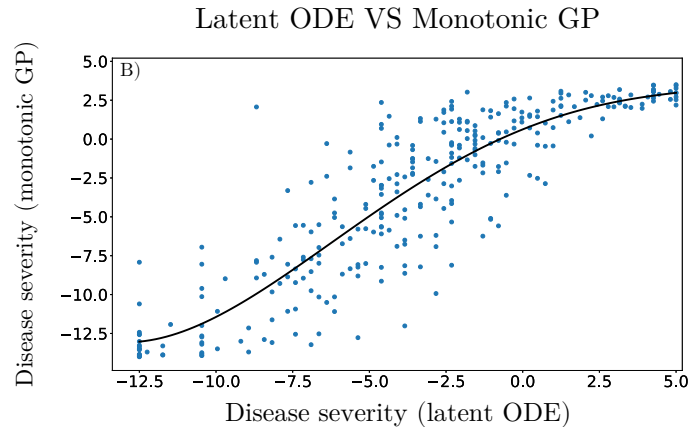
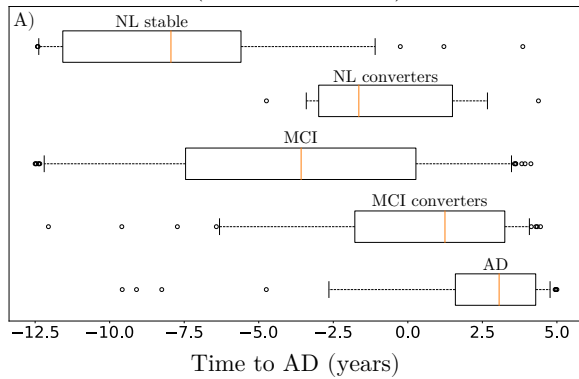
#### 8 **This PDF file includes:**

- 9 Figs. S1 to S5
- 10 Tables S1 to S3
- 11 SI References

12 **Time-shift comparison and validation.** We compared our estimated disease severity (Figure 2 Panel II in the manuscript) with  
 13 the one obtained applying the monotonic Gaussian Process (GP) model of (1) from the state-of-the-art (Figure S1A). While  
 14 both methods estimate significant time differences when going from healthy to pathological stages, our approach captures a  
 15 larger temporal variability for both earlier and later stages of the disease, as shown in Figure S1B, highlighting a stronger  
 16 separability across clinical stages.

17  
 18 We also assessed the model on an independent testing cohort from the ADNI composed of 130 NL stable, 10 NL converters, 125  
 19 MCI stable, 7 MCI converters, and 12 AD subjects which were not necessarily amyloid positive. It is important to note that no  
 20 PET-FDG data was available for these subjects. We provide in Table S1 socio-demographic and clinical information for the  
 21 testing cohort across the different clinical groups. Despite the fact that no FDG data was used to estimate the disease severity,  
 22 we observe in Figure S2 that the method still exhibits good separating performances between clinical stages, coherently with  
 23 the clinical status of the testing individuals.

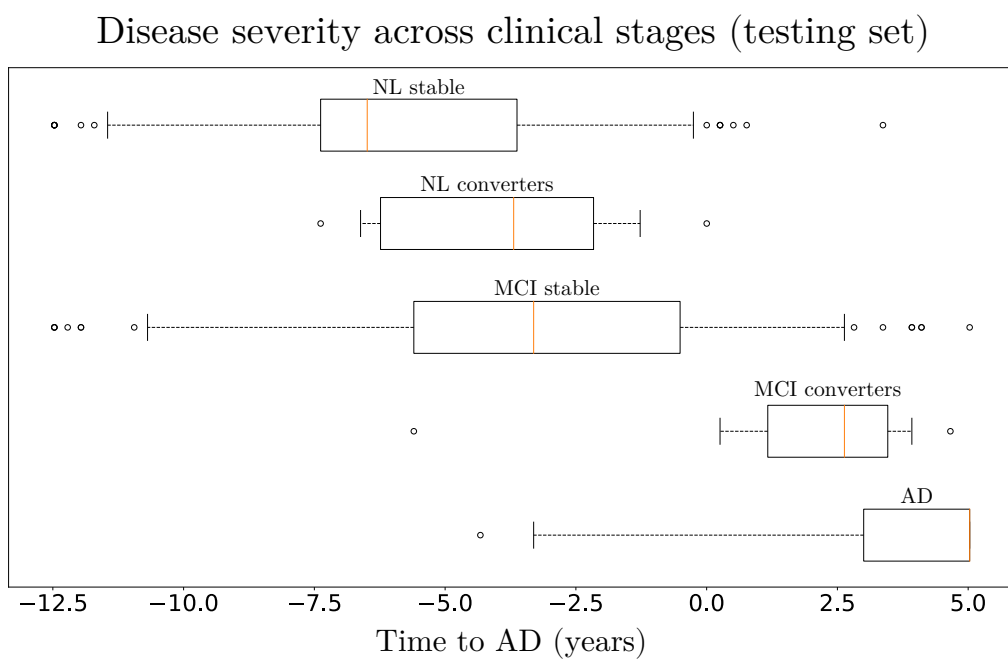
Estimated disease severity across clinical stages  
(monotonic GP)



**Fig. S1.** A: Distribution of the disease severity estimated by the monotonic GP method (1) on the training set. NL: normal individuals, MCI: mild cognitive impairment, AD: Alzheimer’s dementia. B: Comparison of the disease severity estimated by our method (denoted as latent ODE) with respect to the one estimated by the monotonic GP.

**Table S1. Baseline socio-demographic and clinical information for testing cohort (284 subjects for 2116 data points). Average values, standard deviation in parenthesis. NL: normal individuals, MCI: mild cognitive impairment, AD: Alzheimer’s dementia. ADAS11: Alzheimer’s Disease Assessment Scale-cognitive subscale, 11 items. AV45: (18)F-florbetapir Amyloid PET imaging. SUVR: Standardized Uptake Value Ratio.**

	NL stable	NL converters	MCI stable	MCI converters	AD
N	130	10	125	7	12
Age (yrs)	72 (6)	74 (8)	71 (8)	73 (9)	78 (6)
Education (yrs)	17 (2)	16 (2)	16 (3)	14 (3)	17 (2)
ADAS11	5.4 (2.8)	7.7 (4.1)	7.8 (3.3)	14.3 (5.2)	15.0 (6.7)
WholeBrain (cm <sup>3</sup> )	1063 (103)	1104 (98)	1054 (97)	966 (104)	1010 (108)
AV45 (SUVR)	0.9 (0.1)	1.0 (0.1)	1.0 (0.1)	1.1 (0.2)	1.2 (0.3)



**Fig. S2.** Distribution of the disease severity estimated for the subjects of the testing set, relatively to the long-term dynamics of Figure 2 Panel II) left in the manuscript. NL: normal individuals, MCI: mild cognitive impairment, AD: Alzheimer's dementia.



24 **Clinical scores progression.** We provide in Figure S3 the estimated progression of the RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting  
 25 scores based on the z-score trajectories of Figure 2 Panel II) (left) in the manuscript.

## Clinical outcomes evolution

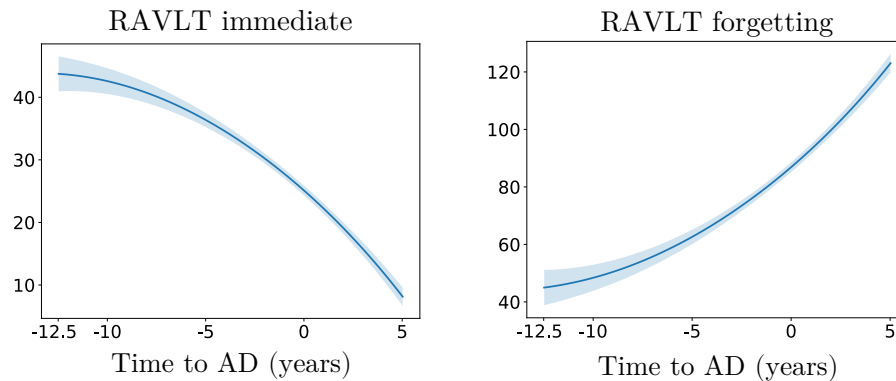


Fig. S3. Modelled long-term evolution of RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting scores. Shaded areas represent the standard deviation of the average trajectory.

26 **Effect of intervention for RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting.** Similarly to Figure 4 in the manuscript, Figure S4 shows the  
 27 change in statistical power depending on intervention time and sample size for the RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting.  
 28 We also provide in Table S2 the estimated improvement for RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting at conversion with a  
 29 sample size of 100 subjects per arm for both 100% and 50% amyloid lowering depending on the intervention time.

## Amyloid lowering intervention 100%      Amyloid lowering intervention 50%

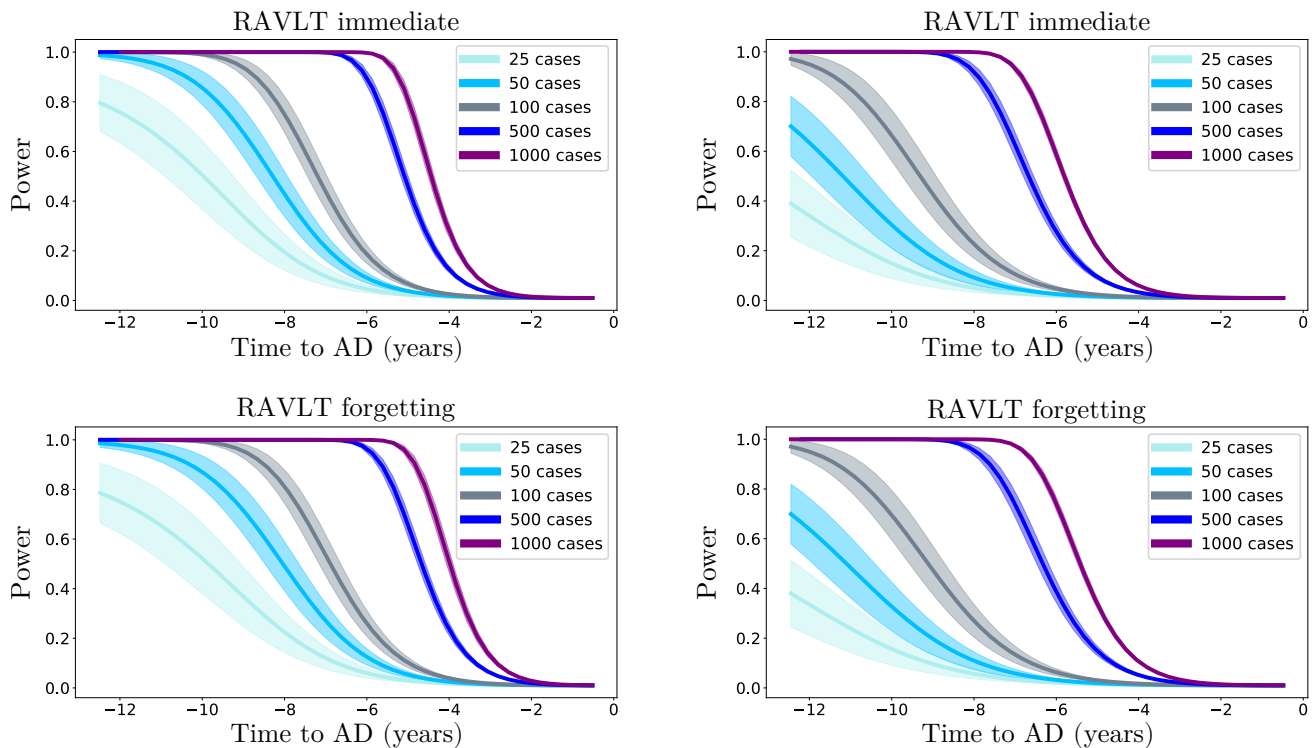


Fig. S4. Modelled long-term evolution of RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting scores. Shaded areas represent the standard deviation of the average trajectory.

**Table S2. Estimated mean (standard deviation) improvement of RAVLT immediate and RAVLT forgetting at predicted conversion time for the normal progression case by year of simulated intervention (100% and 50% amyloid lowering interventions). Results in bold indicate a statistically significant difference between placebo and treated scenarios ( $p < 0.01$ , two-sided t-test, 100 cases per arm). AD: Alzheimer's dementia, RAVLT: Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test.**

**Amyloid lowering intervention 100%**  
Point improvement per intervention time

Years to AD \ Score	-12.5	-10	-7.5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1
RAVLT immediate	<b>10.0 (7.0)</b>	<b>6.2 (4.1)</b>	<b>3.0 (2.0)</b>	1.2 (0.8)	0.7 (0.5)	0.3 (0.3)	0.1 (0.1)	0.03 (0.02)
RAVLT forgetting (%)	<b>23.6 (16.2)</b>	<b>15.0 (10.0)</b>	<b>7.7 (5.1)</b>	3.0 (2.2)	2.0 (1.6)	1.0 (1.0)	0.4 (0.4)	0.2 (0.1)

**Amyloid lowering intervention 50%**  
Point improvement per intervention time

Years to AD \ Score	-12.5	-10	-7.5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1
RAVLT immediate	<b>5.0 (3.5)</b>	<b>3.1 (2.0)</b>	1.5 (1.0)	0.6 (0.4)	0.3 (0.3)	0.2 (0.1)	0.1 (0.1)	0.01 (0.01)
RAVLT forgetting (%)	<b>11.8 (8.1)</b>	<b>7.4 (4.9)</b>	3.7 (2.5)	1.5 (1.0)	0.9 (0.7)	0.5 (0.5)	0.3 (0.2)	0.1 (0.1)

<sup>30</sup> **Simulated clinical endpoints.** We provide in Table S3 the estimated values for each clinical score at predicted conversion time  
<sup>31</sup> for the normal progression case when performing the simulations presented in Section Simulating clinical intervention.

**Table S3. Estimated mean (standard deviation) of the clinical outcomes at predicted conversion time for the normal progression case by year of simulated intervention (100% and 50% amyloid lowering interventions). Results in bold indicate a statistically significant difference between placebo and treated scenarios ( $p < 0.01$ , two-sided t-test, 100 cases per arm). AD: Alzheimer's dementia, ADAS11: Alzheimer's Disease Assessment Scale, MMSE: Mini-Mental State Examination, FAQ: Functional Assessment Questionnaire, RAVLT: Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test.**

**Amyloid lowering intervention 100%**  
Score per intervention time

Years to AD \ Score	-12.5	-10	-7.5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1
ADAS11	<b>10.7 (7.5)</b>	<b>13.4 (6.2)</b>	<b>15.7 (5.3)</b>	17.0 (4.8)	17.3 (4.7)	17.5 (4.6)	17.6 (4.5)	17.7 (4.5)
MMSE	<b>26.8 (3.0)</b>	<b>25.8 (2.5)</b>	<b>24.9 (2.2)</b>	24.3 (2.0)	24.2 (1.9)	24.1 (1.9)	24.0 (1.8)	24.0 (1.9)
FAQ	<b>4.6 (5.9)</b>	<b>6.7 (4.9)</b>	<b>8.4 (4.2)</b>	9.5 (3.8)	9.8 (3.7)	10.0 (3.6)	10.1 (3.6)	10.1 (3.5)
RAVLT immediate	<b>35.1 (11.0)</b>	<b>31.3 (9.0)</b>	<b>28.1 (7.7)</b>	26.2 (7.0)	25.7 (6.7)	25.4 (6.6)	25.2 (6.5)	25.1 (6.4)
RAVLT forgetting (%)	<b>63.2 (26.7)</b>	<b>71.8 (22.0)</b>	<b>79.1 (18.5)</b>	83.8 (16.4)	85.0 (15.8)	85.8 (15.3)	86.4 (15.0)	86.6 (14.7)

**Amyloid lowering intervention 50%**  
Score per intervention time

Years to AD \ Score	-12.5	-10	-7.5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1
ADAS11	<b>14.1 (5.7)</b>	<b>15.5 (5.1)</b>	16.6 (4.8)	17.2 (4.6)	17.4 (4.5)	17.5 (4.5)	17.6 (4.5)	17.6 (4.5)
MMSE	<b>25.5 (2.2)</b>	<b>25.0 (2.0)</b>	24.5 (1.9)	24.2 (1.8)	24.1 (1.8)	24.1 (1.8)	24.1 (1.8)	24.1 (1.8)
FAQ	<b>7.2 (4.4)</b>	<b>8.3 (4.0)</b>	9.2 (3.8)	9.7 (3.6)	9.8 (3.5)	9.9 (3.5)	10.0 (3.5)	10.0 (3.5)
RAVLT immediate	<b>30.3 (8.2)</b>	<b>28.4 (7.4)</b>	26.8 (6.9)	25.9 (6.6)	25.6 (6.5)	25.5 (6.4)	25.4 (6.3)	25.3 (6.3)
RAVLT forgetting (%)	<b>74.8 (19.7)</b>	<b>79.2 (17.5)</b>	82.8 (16.1)	85.1 (16.2)	85.7 (14.9)	86.0 (14.7)	86.3 (14.5)	86.5 (17.4)

<sup>32</sup> **Lower bound.** We provide here the detailed derivation to obtain the ELBO of Equation 6 in the main manuscript.

$$\begin{aligned}
\log p(\mathbf{X}|\sigma^2, \psi) &= \log \left[ \int p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) p(\mathbf{z}) d\mathbf{z} \right] \\
&= \log \left[ \int p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) p(\mathbf{z}) \frac{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})}{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} d\mathbf{z} \right] \\
&= \log \left[ \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \frac{p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) p(\mathbf{z})}{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \right] \\
&\stackrel{\text{Jensen}}{\geq} \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \left[ \log \frac{p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) p(\mathbf{z})}{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \right] \\
&= \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) \right] - \mathcal{D} \left[ q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X}) | p(\mathbf{z}) \right] \\
&= \mathcal{E}.
\end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

33 Given that:

$$p(\mathbf{X}|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma^2, \psi) = \prod_m p(\mathbf{x}^m|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma_m^2, \psi_m), \quad q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X}) = \prod_m q(z^m|\mathbf{X}), \quad \text{and, } p(\mathbf{z}) = \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{I}).$$

34 We obtain:

$$\mathcal{E} = \sum_m E_{q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X})} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{x}^m|\mathbf{z}, \theta_{ODE}, \sigma_m^2, \psi_m) \right] - \mathcal{D} \left[ q(z^m|\mathbf{x}^m) | p(z^m) \right]. \tag{2}$$

35 **KL divergence.** We have that:

$$\begin{aligned}
q(z^m|\mathbf{X}) &= \mathcal{N}(f(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^1), h(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^2)), \\
p(z^m) &= \mathcal{N}(0, 1).
\end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

36 We use the closed-form formula to calculate the KL divergence between two normal distributions:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathcal{D} \left[ q(\mathbf{z}|\mathbf{X}) | p(\mathbf{z}) \right] &= \sum_m \mathcal{D} \left[ q(z^m|\mathbf{x}^m) | p(z^m) \right] \\
&= \frac{1}{2} \sum_m \left[ -\log(h(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^2)) - 1 + h(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^2) + f(\mathbf{x}^m, \phi_m^1)^2 \right]
\end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

37 **Graphical model.** Figure S5 below provides the graphical model illustrating the method presented in Materials and Methods.

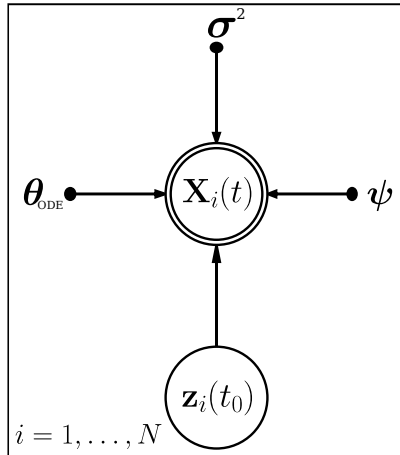


Fig. S5. Graphical model of the proposed method.

38 **ELBO computation.** Algorithm 1 below details the steps to compute the ELBO for a given subject  $i$  at time  $t$ .

---

**Algorithm 1** Forward pass to compute the ELBO for a given subject  $i$  at time  $t$ .

---

- 1: **function** COMPUTE\_ELBO( $\mathbf{X}(t), \mathbf{X}(t_0), \theta_{ODE}, \psi, \phi, \sigma^2$ )  
 For ease of notation we drop the  $i$  index in the pseudo-code.
  - 2: Sample  $\mathbf{z}(t_0) \sim q(\mathbf{z}(t_0)|\mathbf{X}(t_0)) = \prod_m \mathcal{N}(f(\mathbf{x}^m(t_0), \phi_m^1), h(\mathbf{x}^m(t_0), \phi_m^2))$  ▷ Baseline latent representation (reparameterization trick).
  - 3: Compute  $\mathbf{z}(t) = MIDPOINT(\mathbf{z}(t_0), g, \theta_{ODE}, t)$  ▷ Predict latent representation at time  $t$  by numerically solving the ODEs system.
  - 4: Compute  $\mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}(t_0)|\mathbf{X}(t_0))} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{x}^m(t)|\mathbf{z}(t), \theta_{ODE}, \sigma_m^2, \psi_m) \right] \approx -\frac{D_m}{2} \log(2\pi\sigma_m^2) - \frac{1}{2\sigma_m^2} \|\mathbf{x}^m(t) - \mu_m(\mathbf{z}(t))\|^2$  ▷ Expectation term Equation 6.
  - 5: Compute  $\mathcal{D} \left[ q(z^m(t_0)|\mathbf{x}^m(t_0)) | p(z^m(t_0)) \right] = \frac{1}{2} \left[ -\log(h(\mathbf{x}^m(t_0), \phi_m^2)) - 1 + h(\mathbf{x}^m(t_0), \phi_m^2) + f(\mathbf{x}^m(t_0), \phi_m^1)^2 \right]$  ▷ KL divergence Equation 6.
  - 6: Compute  $\mathcal{E} = \sum_m \mathbb{E}_{q(\mathbf{z}(t_0)|\mathbf{X}(t_0))} \left[ \log p(\mathbf{x}^m(t)|\mathbf{z}(t), \theta_{ODE}, \sigma_m^2, \psi_m) \right] - \mathcal{D} \left[ q(z^m(t_0)|\mathbf{x}^m(t_0)) | p(z^m(t_0)) \right]$ .
  - 7: **Return**  $\mathcal{E}$
- 

## 39 References

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 41 diagnostic uncertainty: Application to staging and prediction in Alzheimer’s disease. *NeuroImage* **190**, 56–68 (2019).