Background: The aim was to examine the longitudinal occurrence and persistence of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) in Alzheimer’s disease (AD). Methods: Following 60 patients with mild to severe AD over a period of 2 years with annual evaluations, the prospective occurrence and persistence of BPSD in AD were determined by using the Behavioural Abnormalities in AD Rating scale (BEHAVE-AD). Clinical and demographic features of the AD patients were analysed for their association with course features of these symptoms. Results: All of the 60 AD patients experienced BPSD at some point during the 2-year period, particularly agitation was present in every patient within this period. 2-year persistence of BPSD in AD was frequently observed in patients with agitation and with depressiveness, with less frequency in patients with anxiety and aggressiveness, but not in patients with delusions or hallucinations. 2-year persistent aggressiveness was associated with older age and more functional impairment. More functional impairment was also related to 2-year non-persistent hallucinations. Conclusions: Counselling AD patients and their families and tailoring therapeutic strategies should take into account the different modi of BPSD in AD occurring and persisting longitudinally and interacting with functional disturbances. Copyright © 2000 S. Karger AG, Basel