Neuropsychological Testing (NPT)
Indications and Limitations
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A.M.B.E.R. clinic
Albuquerque Multidisciplinary Behavioral Evaluation for Recovery and Resiliency

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Overview

• Common indications for use
• Is reputation enough?
• Limitations of NPT
• Importance of phrasing
Indications for Use

• Overall cognitive functioning
  • Verbal skills
    • generative & comprehension
  • Performance skills
    • fine motor; fluidity
    • timing; visuo-spatial planning
• Structured
  • minimize distractions
  • timed
• Consistent
Indication for Use

• Changes in functioning
  • Try to repair medical problems first
• Subtle loss of planning, memory
  • particularly for high fx individuals
• Uneven abilities
  • better characterization of strengths/weaknesses
• Expressive deficit
Is reputation enough?

• Clinical practitioners develop skill sets that increase expertise
• Application of neuropsychological test batteries involve judgment and clinical appreciation of symptom context
• In a word, no.
Limitations of NPT

- Adaptations for sensory deficits are not in standard battery.
- Cultural contexts, language barriers skew results unless test battery and interpretation are specifically adapted
- Sustained attention and motor persistence needed to complete
Limitations of NPT

- Adaptation for TBI
  - impersistent energy/effort
  - shifting attention
  - pain (including headache)
  - sensory overload

- Subtests
  - structured assessment; don’t mimic chaos of free-flowing real life, such as family gatherings, supermarket settings, etc.
Importance of Phrasing

• Examples: **poor**
  48 yo man, r/o dementia, neg. psych hx.
• Examples: **better**
  48 yo man, 3 yr post TBI due to MVA (t-boned, driver-side, was driver); problems in attention, energy, sleep, recall; not depressed. Request help with strategies for memory and building functional independence (i.e. cognitive and perceptual strengths/weaknesses)
Interpretation

• When in doubt, discuss with the expert you consulted
  • Comparison of approach to testing situation may shed light on other repeated difficulties

• Observations do not always get recorded
Summary

- Neuropsychological testing is a valued tool
- Clinical relevance and management
- You get what you ask for