

# Psychological Testing

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# Objectives

- Obtain an overview of psychological testing and assessment
- Become familiar with available psychological assessment
- Identify when a referral for psychological and/or neuropsychological testing should be considered

# Psychological assessment

- Comprehensive evaluations completed by clinical psychologists and neuropsychologists
- Inform understanding of a person and their behavior, skills, capabilities, and personality through collection, interpretation, and integration of information
- Evaluations are used to measure and observe a patient's behavior to determine diagnosis and guide treatment

# Goals of psychological assessment

- Comprehensive assessment of a patient to identify and establish accurate and appropriate clinical conclusions
- Obtain relevant, reliable, and valid information about patient and their clinical presentation to inform and guide best treatment options
- Examine how a child is functioning in comparison to expectations to that child's age or developmental level

# Components of psychological assessment

- Comprehensive clinical interview
- Record review
  - Previous evaluations
  - Medical records
  - Educational records
- Observational data
- Formal psychological and/or neuropsychological testing
  
- *Following the interpretation and integration of these components:*
  - Clinical impressions/diagnoses
  - Recommendations
  - Feedback and comprehensive written report

# Types of testing measures

- Norm-referenced tests:
  - Performance is based on comparison to a normative sample
  - Developed and evaluated by researchers and found to be effective for measuring a particular construct, behavior, trait, or ability
  - Individually administered:
    - intelligence,
    - academic achievement,
    - memory,
    - executive functioning
- Objective tests:
  - Parent, teacher, self reports:
    - Symptom checklists
    - Structured reports on personality
    - Uses normative data
- Projective tests:
  - Unstructured responses to ambiguous stimuli
  - Trained in administration and scoring to increase validity and reliability
  - Uses normative data

# Areas testing can address

- Intelligence/cognitive abilities
- Achievement (e.g., academics)
- Memory, attention, executive functioning
- Behavioral, emotional, and social development
- Common areas:
  - AD/HD and executive functioning concerns
  - Learning disabilities
  - Emotional/behavioral functioning (depression, anxiety, behavioral concerns, etc.)
  - Autism and neurodevelopmental disorders
  - Psychosis and related concerns
  - Trauma-related concerns
- Batteries:
  - Typically choose specific set of measures or tests for each individual client and/or referral questions while considering relevant history, behavioral observations, and differential diagnosis

# How will assessment help a patient?

- Provide diagnostic clarification
  - Including etiology, prognosis, and treatment
- Guide targeted intervention and treatment recommendations, including access to certain resources and support (e.g., IEP, early intervention)
- Increase interdisciplinary communication
- Help parents, treatment providers, and school staff better understand a child's strengths and weakness
  - Appropriate expectations
  - Function to best of abilities
- *When to consider:*
  - Ongoing concern following treatment
  - Obtain diagnostic clarification
  - Identify needs and inform treatment

# Neuropsychology

- Subspecialty within psychology
  - Study and understanding of brain-behavior relationships
- Neuropsychologists:
  - Completed specific coursework and clinical training in neuropsychology
  - Predoctoral internship in neuropsychology-focused position
  - Two year postdoctoral fellowship in neuropsychology

# Neuropsychological testing

- Approach to assessment that focuses more on functional neuroanatomy and normal brain development
- Goals:
  - Establishment of a diagnosis
  - Help understand pattern of strengths and weaknesses
  - Establish performance baseline to document functional effects of medical interventions (e.g., neurosurgical procedures)

*National Academy of Neuropsychology: A Physician's Guide to Pediatric Neuropsychological Assessment*

# When to consider neuropsychological testing

- When learning, attention, or behaviors problems present in the context of:
  - History of known or suspected brain injury/illness
  - History of genetic disorders or neurodevelopment disorders that impact brain development
  - Medical concerns (e.g., diabetes, seizures)
  - Medical treatment with possible CNS effects (chemotherapy/radiotherapy)
  - Exposure to neurotoxins (e.g., prenatal exposure to substances)
  - Rapid or gradual unexplained change in the child's usual functioning

*National Academy of Neuropsychology: A Physician's Guide to Pediatric Neuropsychological Assessment*

# When referring for psychological testing...

- Provide a referral question:
  - What do you want to learn?
  - What are you wondering or concerned about?
  - Diagnostic clarification?
- Common referrals from pediatricians:
  - ADHD,
  - Learning difficulties,
  - Behavioral and emotional problems,
  - Developmental concerns.
- If in doubt, refer!

# References

- <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/assessment.aspx>
- National Academy of Neuropsychology
- American Psychological Association Division 40: Society for Clinical Neuropsychology
- AERA (American Educational Research Association), APA (American Psychological Association), and NCME (National Council on Measurement in Education). Standards for educational and psychological testing. (2014).