USED AND RELIABLE METHODS FOR COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE ELDERLY: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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Abstract

Introduction: The growing aging population has led to a significant increase in cognitive impairment cases, making accurate assessment of these changes a priority in elderly healthcare. Proper choice of assessment methods is essential to ensure reliable diagnoses, differentiating between normal aging and pathologies like dementia. Validated and standardized instruments allow early detection of cognitive decline, enabling timely interventions and individualized care planning. Thus, careful selection of these tests is crucial for clinical effectiveness and longitudinal cognitive monitoring in the elderly. Objective: To conduct a narrative literature review aimed at identifying and describing the most used and reliable methods for cognitive assessment in the elderly population. Methodology: A narrative review was conducted in relevant electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and SciELO, using the descriptors "cognitive assessment in elderly," "cognitive decline," "neuropsychological tests," and "elderly mental health." Articles published between 2013 and 2024 in Portuguese and English were selected, including systematic reviews, validation studies, and original research focused on elderly populations. Results: A total of 57 studies were analyzed, with the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) cited in 49 articles, followed by the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) in 41, the Clock Drawing Test in 30, the Pfeffer Functional Activities Questionnaire (FAQ) in 26, and the Trail Making Test (TMT) in 22 studies. These tests demonstrate broad clinical applicability, robust psychometric properties, and sensitivity to multiple cognitive domains, including memory, attention, executive functions, and visuospatial abilities, critical elements in elderly assessment. Conclusion: Systematic cognitive assessment using validated instruments such as MMSE, MoCA, Clock Drawing Test, FAQ, and TMT is essential for elderly mental health, providing early diagnosis and support for therapeutic interventions. Test selection should consider patient characteristics such as education and available time, as well as clinical context, to optimize accuracy and effectiveness in cognitive follow-up.

Keywords: Cognition; Older adults; Mental health; Cognitive assessment; Neuropsychological tests