Tip Sheet 3 - Cognitive assessment and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background

Cognitive assessments help determine the cognitive ability of an individual. A cognitive assessment should include assessment of function using standardised and validated assessment tools and information gathered from family or informant.

There are a range of cognitive assessment tools that have been developed. The RUDAS is a cognitive assessment tool which has been validated for use with people from CALD backgrounds and is the tool recommended by the 2010 Expert Clinical Reference Group (ECRG) (Sansoni et al., 2010) for use by ACAS staff.

**RUDAS**

**What is the RUDAS:** The Rowland Universal Dementia Assessment Scale (RUDAS) is a scale that assesses cognitive impairment in people from all educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The RUDAS was developed in 2004 by Storey, Rowland, Basic, Conforti, and Dickson. Each item was reviewed by a cultural advisory group for cultural relevance and ease of translation. It has also been validated in multicultural populations in Australia.

**Benefits of the RUDAS:** The RUDAS seems likely to have less cultural and educational bias and appears suitable for assessing clients from CALD backgrounds. It takes approximately 10 minutes to administer.

**Training:** The RUDAS requires administrator's to be trained in its use. An easy to access DVD (and guidelines) is available on the Alzheimer's Australia website:


The RUDAS consists of a series of questions aimed at assessing memory, visuospatial orientation, praxis, visuoconstructional drawing, memory recall and language.

**Cut off score:** 22 or less (lower scores indicate greater impairment); 23-30 considered normal, and needs to be considered in the clinical context.

**SMMSE**

The Standardised Mini Mental State Examination (SMMSE) was the tool recommended for use with non-CALD clients by the 2010 Expert Clinical Reference Group (Sansoni et al., 2010). However, ACAS staff may wish to use the SMMSE to supplement the RUDAS with some CALD clients. Care should be taken when interpreting the SMMSE scores when used with people from CALD backgrounds.

**What is the SMMSE:** The SMMSE is an adaptation of the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE). The MMSE is a cognitive screening tool that has commonly been reported to have cultural and educational biases (Basic et al, 2009; Rowland et al, 2006). The SMMSE was developed by Molloy and Standish in 2007.
to provide a systematic approach to the administration of the MMSE.

**Benefits of the SMMSE:** The SMMSE has detailed instructions with time limits on questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to administer.

**Cut off score:** Lower scores indicate greater impairment (range: 0-30)

Scoring guidelines for assessing cognitive impairment (Vertesi, Lever, & Molley, 2001):

- 30 = No impairment;
- 26 – 30 = Considered normal;
- 20 – 25 = Mild;
- 10 – 19 = Moderate;
- 0 – 9 = Severe.

**Things to be aware of**

**RUDAS:**

Although the RUDAS has consistently been found to be free of cultural and educational bias in multicultural samples in Australia, one study in South India did find education impacted on the RUDAS score.

Sansoni et al (2007) suggest that question 5 (judgement -traffic lights and busy street) may reflect a degree of acculturation to dominant Western and urban based cultures.

**SMMSE**

Questions most commonly modified in overseas studies to make the MMSE more culturally and linguistically relevant or relevant to those less educated include:

- **Culture:**
  - Repeating "no ifs, ands or buts" (replaced with a more common phrase/tongue twister).
  - Orientation to time and place (replaced with regional names of places or terminology and accepting traditional calendar systems responses; and season removed or replaced with time of day).
  - Accepting regional language differences in responses.

- **Education:**
  - Spelling world backward (replaced with days of the week backwards).
  - Counting backward by 7s (replaced with a subtraction task).
  - Writing a sentence (replaced with tell me something about...).

**Translated Tools**

**RUDAS**

The RUDAS seems likely to have less cultural and educational bias so it is easily interpreted by an interpreter during an assessment. Some translated (written) versions are available but are not validated.

**SMMSE**

There are no formal translations known of the SMMSE, however the MMSE has similar questions to the SMMSE. The MMSE and its translations are copyrighted by Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR) and can be purchased online [www.parinc.com/](http://www.parinc.com/).

Some studies which have translated the MMSE and provided psychometric properties are listed in the references below.
The Assessment of Older People with dementia and depression of CALD Backgrounds: A review of current practice and the development of guidelines for Victorian ACAS (undertaken by NARI, 2011). Funds for this project were provided by the Council of Australian governments (COAG) as part of the COAG initiative to strengthen and improve the Aged Care Assessment Program (ACAP). The ACAP is an initiative of the Australian Government and is jointly funded by the Australian Government and the Government of Victoria.

Further Resources and References

Cognitive Assessment
Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit: www.vtpu.org.au/

References

RUDAS

The RUDAS can also be found on the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre website: http://www.dementia-assessment.com.au/measures.html

RUDAS References

SMMSE
International Psychogeriatric Association:
This website contains administration guidelines and a copy of the SMMSE: http://www.ipa-online.org/ipaonlinev3/ipaprograms/guideroaddiagnosis/appendix3.asp

Permission to use/reproduce the SMMSE and attain a copy of the guidelines can be obtained by contacting Dr. D William Molloy (Published by New Grange Press).

Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR):
To order copies of the MMSE and the various translations visit the following website: www.parinc.com/

SMMSE/MMSE References


**Arabic MMSE:** Wrobel, N.H. & Farrag, M.F. (2004). Identification of dementia and mental health symptoms in an elderly Arab American sample: Final report. Wayne County Senior Citizens Services, Detroit. (Various tools, including the MMSE are included in Arabic as an appendix - education based cut off scores)