

Psychometric assessment with refugees: special considerations

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Youth Health Forum: empowering young refugees: challenges and opportunities
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TMHC


- A NSW Health statewide service
- Works with health professionals and communities across New South Wales
- Supports positive mental health for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities



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Referrals


- TMHC receives referrals for clinical consultation from
 - NSW Health mental health services
 - NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS)




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Referrals from NSW RHS

- Requests for culturally appropriate short-term interventions for clients with mental health problems
- Requests for assessments of cognitive functioning



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Cognitive assessments

- For clients assumed/suspected of having intellectual disability
- To provide formal assessment to assist with application for NDIS services
- Mainly for adults (including young adults)
- Mainly from Iraq and Syria




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Cognitive assessments

- School-age children can get assessment from school counsellor and an occupational therapist
- I have seen some people aged 17-25
- Limits of my expertise
- Other services may be better able to help



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Challenges for appointment

- Booking interpreter who speaks the right language, e.g. client may only speak Chaldean or use international sign language (hearing impaired)
- Interpreter doing their best to translate test instructions, but may be providing more prompts



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Challenges for appointment

- Gaining cooperation from client to participate in testing – may not be used to formal testing procedures
- Client with intellectual disability may be confused by interpreting process, especially if telephone (not recommended)



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Challenges for appointment

- Whether or not carer should stay in room, pros and cons
- Family members to answer long list of questions about client
- Managing client or carer distress about assessing for intellectual disability



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What has worked



- Collect information from a number of sources, e.g., previous report from transit country, interview with carers about client history, behavioural observation of client, scale of adaptive functioning with carer
- Sometimes separate appointments for client with carer, then carer alone



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What has worked



- Appointment usually at RHS premises
- Working with a specialist service (RHS)
- RHS very helpful in coordinating the appointment with client's family, SSI caseworker for transport, and the interpreter



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What has worked



- RHS find out from client's family what is the **client's** strongest language before booking interpreter
- Interpreter same gender as client
- Explain to interpreter the tests are designed so that the client will get more difficult items wrong



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What has worked



- Explain assessment to family and encourage them to ask for coffee/tea breaks
- Carer to stay in room with client for cognitive assessment in some situations – qualitative information
- Tissues and basic counselling skills



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What has worked



- RHS assist the clients to apply for NDIS after receiving my report
- Feedback from RHS is that clients assessed as having moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability are successful in obtaining NDIS



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Other key services

- Neuropsychologists at local hospitals
- Health Assessment for Refugee Kids
- Kogarah Developmental Assessment Service (DAS)
- School counsellors
- STARTTS
- Occupational therapist assessments



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Relevant literature

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