



Enhancing Occupational Therapists' Functional Cognitive Assessments in Acute-Care

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EVIDENCE-BASED QUESTION

Can providing a training in informal cognitive assessment methods boost occupational therapists' confidence and skill, thereby enhancing assessment consistency and therapeutic results in acute care?

BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW

The background of this study revolves around the importance of cognitive assessment in acute care settings. Cognitive testing provides valuable information about an individual's cognitive abilities and their impact on daily functioning (Edelstein et al., 2022). Evidence also shows that cognitive impairment is associated with poor hospital outcomes and is common among adults admitted to acute care hospitals (Jones & Patel, 2020). This evidence-based project examines the impact of a training session for occupational therapists focusing on the value and impact that informal cognitive assessments can have in developing a cognitive baseline, determining safety in returning home, level of support and assist required and the need for ongoing therapies in post-acute or outpatient settings. Occupational therapy practitioners play an essential role in screening for, evaluating and treating cognitive impairments (Casey et al., 2023).

- Acute-care occupational therapists provide care through evaluation and treatment in a multitude of diagnosis. Cognitive assessment in acute-care plays a crucial role in:
- Optimizing therapeutic outcomes
 - Enabling clinicians to establish expectations regarding outcomes by identifying individuals who may be at risk for complications (delirium/cognitive dysfunction)
 - Developing cognitive baseline to monitor changes
 - Detecting existing impairment that impact function

SETTING AND POPULATION

Acute-care occupational therapists affiliated with Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona are responsible for the functional cognitive evaluation and are the primary population. Additional populations impacted through this study includes acute-care patients and their support systems, hospital discharge staff, the medical team, and the acute-care therapy department.

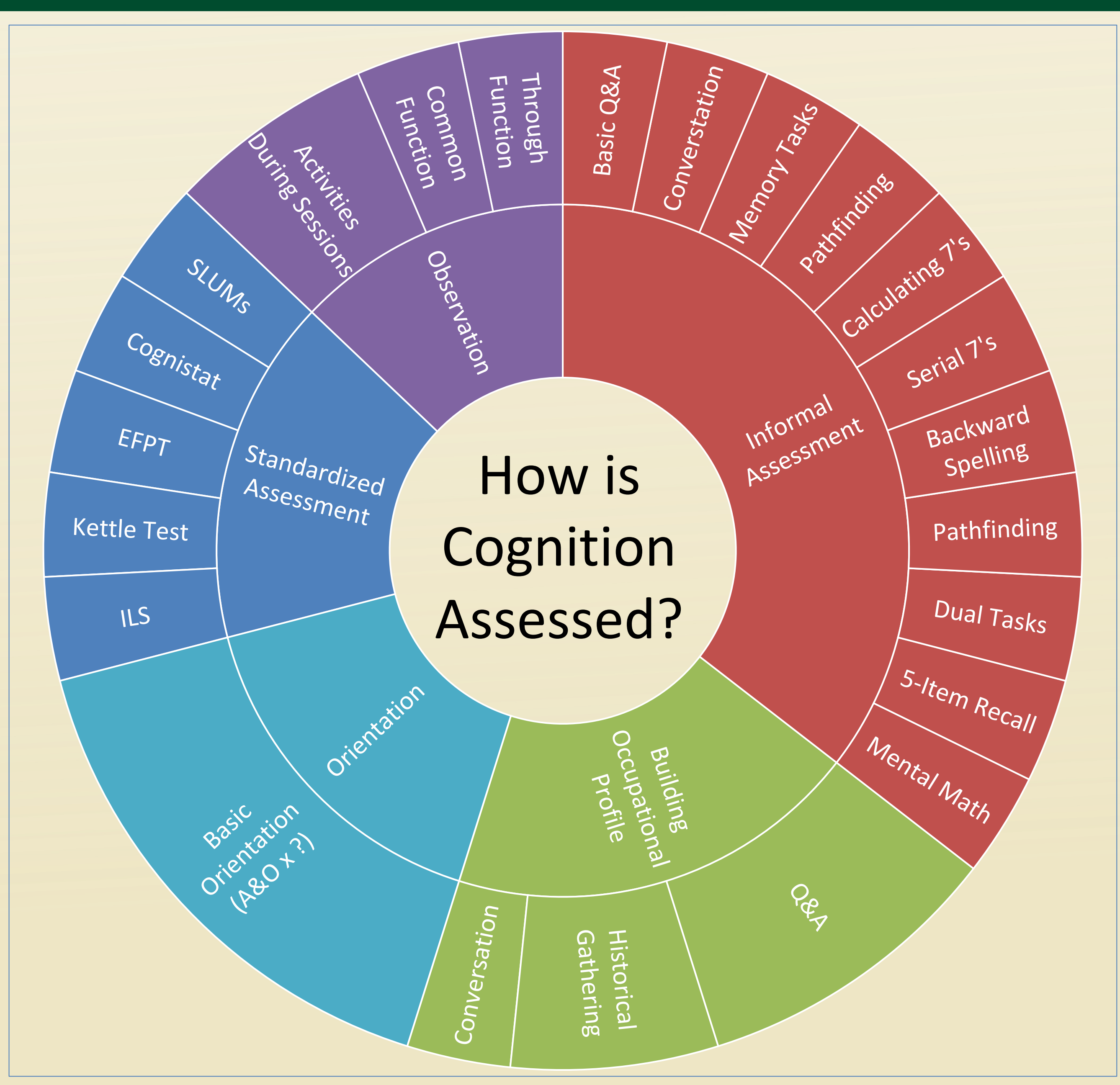
METHODS

Participating occupational therapists were asked to complete a pre- and post-survey before and after engaging in an asynchronous education presentation highlighting the benefits and techniques to complete and document results of informal cognitive assessments. A total of 16 therapists participated, however, only 7 completed both pre- and post-surveys. The survey consisted of a modified Self-efficacy in discipline survey (London, 2023) and qualitative questions. All data was collected through Qualtrics to maintain anonymity and confidentiality for all participants.

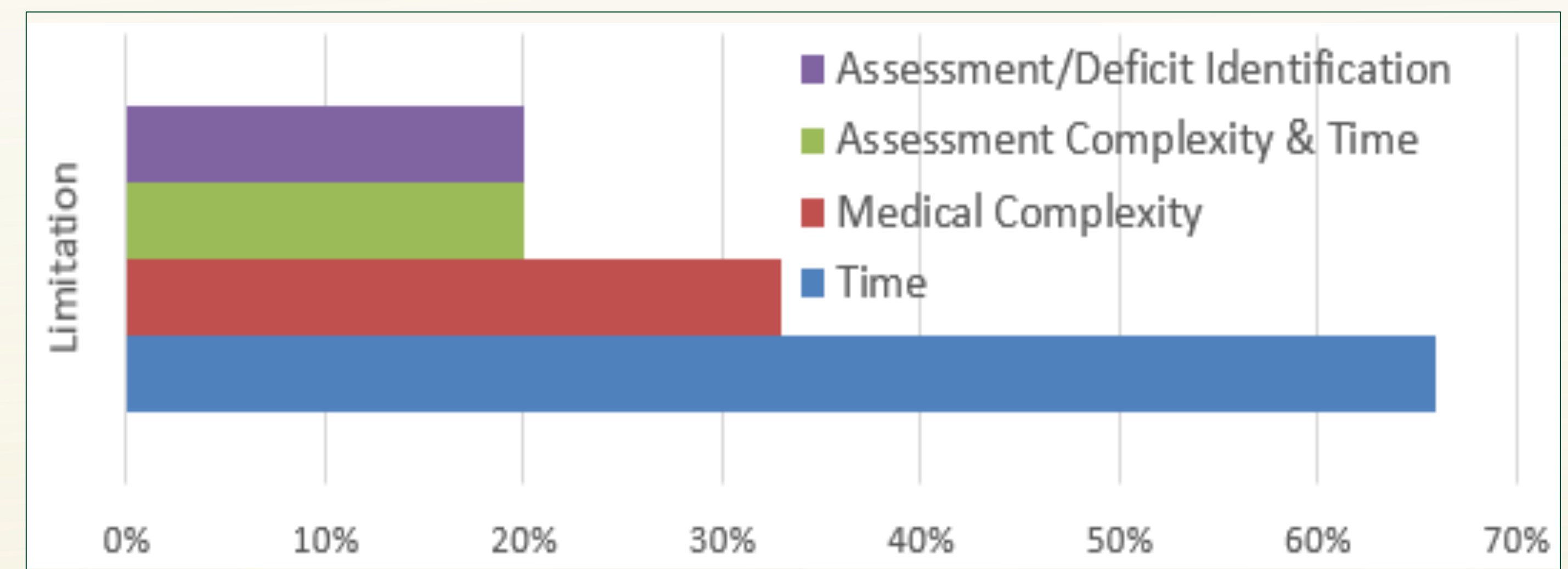
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The project found that over 75% of cognitive assessments are conducted informally or with non-standardized techniques. Qualitative data round that documentation on cognition is primarily associated with formal assessments. Time constraints were identified as the main barrier to assessing cognition in acute care.

PRE-EDUCATIONAL FINDINGS



LIMITATIONS TO ASSESSING COGNITION



QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The modified Self-efficacy in discipline survey was administered pre- and post- an asynchronous educational presentation on informal cognitive assessment techniques. The survey distinguished memory, attention, visuo-special skills, problem-solving, and executive functioning and therapists confidence in assessing individuals with complex and subtle cognitive deficits. The Mann Whitney-U was utilized to assess the small pre- and post-group results and found statistical significance.

SUMMARY

This project aimed to determine and enhance therapist efficacy in cognitive assessment within acute care settings. The survey evaluated confidence, consistency in assessing cognition, and the ability to identify deficits. The results showed a statistically significant difference in pre- and post-assessment scores. The findings underscore the need for continuous education on assessment and documentation practices. By providing ongoing education and strategies to increase therapists confidence and consistency in implementing, assessing, and documenting cognitive assessment, this project enhances patient care and patient outcomes while emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive assessment.

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