Initial Development of a Neuropsychological Screening Measure for School Children

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Abstract

The present study developed a pilot neuropsychological screening measure, called the Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status for Children (RBANS-C) which is designed to be used with children between five and ten years of age. This pilot measure was trialled on a sample of 30 New Zealand primary school children to evaluate its screening ability for children. It is based on the Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS) which is used to screen adults for neurocognitive deficits. Like the RBANS, the RBANS-C is made up of a battery of subtests that assess five cognitive domains, including attention, immediate and delayed memory, visuospatial/constructional abilities and language. Some of the subtests of the RBANS-C were altered to be more suitable for children while others were left the same as in the RBANS. The results from the pilot tryout indicated that some subtests have adequate psychometric properties while others do not. This is most likely due to the small sample size and to a lack of some research controls as well as to inadequacies of some of the subtests. Nevertheless, the results suggest that the RBANS-C seems to identify children with cognitive difficulties, and to some extent isolate those difficulties. No significant sex differences but some considerable age variations were observed since the measure lacks any adjustments for age effects which further improvements of the RBANS-C should incorporate. Also, future research on the RBANS-C will need to develop an alternative form and make necessary modifications to make the RBANS-C an effective neuropsychological screening tool for school children.

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