A5-12: Evidence for Memory Training with Community Elders

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Abstract:
Introduction: The aim of this study was to determine whether a classroom-based memory intervention would improve, maintain, or prevent cognitive and functional decline in a triethnic sample of older adults at-risk for memory loss.
Method(s): A Phase III randomized trial was undertaken. Hierarchical linear models were used to test the research hypotheses. At the final testing there were 108 individuals in the memory intervention group and 101 individuals in the health promotion group. The sample was primarily female (79%), 71% Caucasian, 17% Hispanic and 12% African-American. The typical participant had an average age of 75, 13 years of education, and varying levels of memory performance.

Results: The memory intervention groups made greater gains on the MMSE and reduced memory complaints, both groups maintained their cognitive functions throughout the 24-month study period. Memory performance tended to change differently over time based on the demographic characteristics of the participants regardless of whether they were in the memory or health group. Compared to Whites, both Hispanics and Blacks tended to perform better overtime on visual memory; Blacks performed better overtime on instrumental functional abilities and Hispanics performed better on MMSE. Subsequent analyses indicated that the intervention could be made more cost-effective by shortening it without appreciably affecting the outcome.

Discussion & Conclusions: Both interventions facilitated the maintenance of cognitive and functional ability. Given the body of compelling evidence on memory training with Caucasian samples, for translation to occur across settings numerous conditions must be satisfied. Specifically, the distinctive characteristics of reach (representative sample), effectiveness (feasibility), adoption (multiple settings), implementation (variety of staff) and maintenance and cost (setting-level vs. individual-level) would need further elaboration. Before the translation of memory training could be implemented in the community with a minority population, a large homogeneous and highly motivated sample would need to be recruited for a Phase III randomized clinical trial.

Abstract History:
This abstract has been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.
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