PII-51: Interviewing the Oldest Old: A Call for Standardized Methods

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Abstract:
Introduction: Sensory and cognitive deficits are more prevalent in Oldest Old Adults (OOAs, 85+) than in younger old adults and may present significant barriers to effective communication during interviews. A review of the literature was conducted to 1) determine how often researchers addressed barriers to communication, 2) evaluate whether standardization existed across studies, and 3) summarize successful strategies that improve validity and reliability of interview data in this age group.

Method(s): Using keywords such as “interview” and “oldest old”, Medline, CINAHL Plus, PsychINFO, and Health Source: Nursing Academic, databases were searched for studies that included OOAs, between 2000-2008. 134 abstracts were retrieved and 34 studies were evaluated in depth for use of interview strategies with OOAs. Twelve studies met complete criteria for the review.
**Results:** Out of 34 studies that included persons over age 85, only 9% (12) addressed problems of sensory and cognitive barriers to communication during interview. Standardization across the 12 studies was lacking: Only one study pre-screened for sensory loss and cognitive screening was generally not performed or was subjectively determined by proxies. When utilized, speaking face-to-face at a slower rate, using frequent pauses, and providing large-print cards, overcame some cognitive loss. Face-to-face interview resulted in more accurate data than telephone survey. The two most frequently used successful strategies were large-print cards combined with reading aloud. Assistive-dialogue and picture-mats are novel successful strategies. Further investigation is needed to determine whether the inclusion of proxies for OOAs yields valid data.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Evidence-based interview strategies for data collection that are sensitive to the multiple factors that impact effective communication between oldest old participants and researchers provide more accurate, trustworthy data. Yet they are being used in less than 10% of all studies involving the oldest old. Formation of a methodological consensus panel to develop standardized procedures for interviewing OOAs is recommended by the author.

**Abstract History:**
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