

NeuroGuide: A Translational Tool

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Neuropsychological assessments are performed for a variety of reasons including assessments of legal capacity to make decisions, evaluation of intact or compromised cognitive ability which correlate to functional capacities, and to aid in the diagnostic process for dementias, developmental disabilities, etc. These reports are rich with information for those who can understand terms such as executive functioning deficits, information control and processing, and understand how to change the environment and their behaviors to better support the assessed individual. Unfortunately, even highly educated lay individuals do not have the training to be able to translate the report to enhance the care of a loved one. Physicians, the other source of information on diagnoses and deficits, often have very little time to discuss what a diagnosis or deficits in cognitive abilities will mean for the life of the diagnosed individual or for caregivers. Many neuropsychologists and physicians also lack a bank of resources for individuals with impairments or their caregivers.

Fortunately, NeuroGuide has been developed to assist individuals with cognitive deficits and their caregivers in understanding diagnostic and neuropsychological assessment information. NeuroGuide is a translational tool that is being developed for neuropsychologists and caregivers. A lay individual or professional with the neuropsychological report will be able to go to a web-based site and be cued to enter information from the report. The web-based tool will provide a translation of what deficits, normal abilities, or strengths mean in each area of functioning tested. It will also provide recommendations for social, environmental, and behavioral accommodations for the impaired individual. In addition, it will provide examples for family to help them understand what types of behavior are part of the disease process rather than common misconceptions of the impaired individual or the disease that families often hold.

We have used this tool in the CU Aging Center clinic in Colorado Springs. Often we find that families are so overwhelmed by the diagnosis that they hear little else during feedback sessions. Yet, the NeuroGuide assessment is in an easy-to-read format and gives the family the opportunity to disseminate the information to other family members with little explanation needed. It also allows them to later review what they may have missed. In addition, it provides resources for the impaired individual and caregiver. Finally, in our clinic trials, families are often overwhelmed with emotion when they finally see a description of what they have experienced daily along with practical and useful strategies tailored to improve the life of both the caregiver and the impaired individual.