

**USING THE GERIATRIC DEPRESSION
SCALE AND PROMIS PHYSICAL FUNCTION
ITEM BANK WITH OLDER AFRICAN
AMERICANS AND LATINOS**



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Outline

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- I. Background and Objective
- II. Methods
- III. Results
- IV. Conclusions

Background

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- **Number of people over 65 is growing.**
 - Percent of minorities over 65 will increase from 17% in 2002 to 28% by 2030.*
- **Gaps in SES (e.g., education and income) are increasing.**
 - Differences between highest and lowest groups are growing.
- **Patient reported information is an essential component of the total health evaluation of populations.**
 - Patient surveys are only useful if respondents comprehend what they are being asked.

* US Dept. of Health and Human Services; ACL – Aging_Statistics.2013

Background

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- Two important aspects of health for the elderly are depressive symptoms and physical function.
- Two widely used survey measures are the:
 - Geriatric depression scale (GDS)
 - PROMIS® (Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System) physical functioning scale
- Paucity of information about how well these measures are understood by minority elders.

Background - Scales

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- Geriatric Depression Scale – 30 items
 - ✦ *Do you feel happy most of the time?*
 - *Yes; No*
- Physical Functioning – 124 items
 - ✦ *Are you able to do chores such as vacuuming or yard work?*
 - *Without any difficulty; With a little difficulty; With some difficulty; With much difficulty; Unable to do*

Objective

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To evaluate how well understood these two survey measures are by African American and Latino elderly.

Methods - Readability

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Readability at item level

Flesch-Kincaid (F-K)

$$F-K = (0.39 \times ASL) + (11.8 \times ASW) - 15.59$$

ASL = average sentence length

ASW = average number of syllables per word

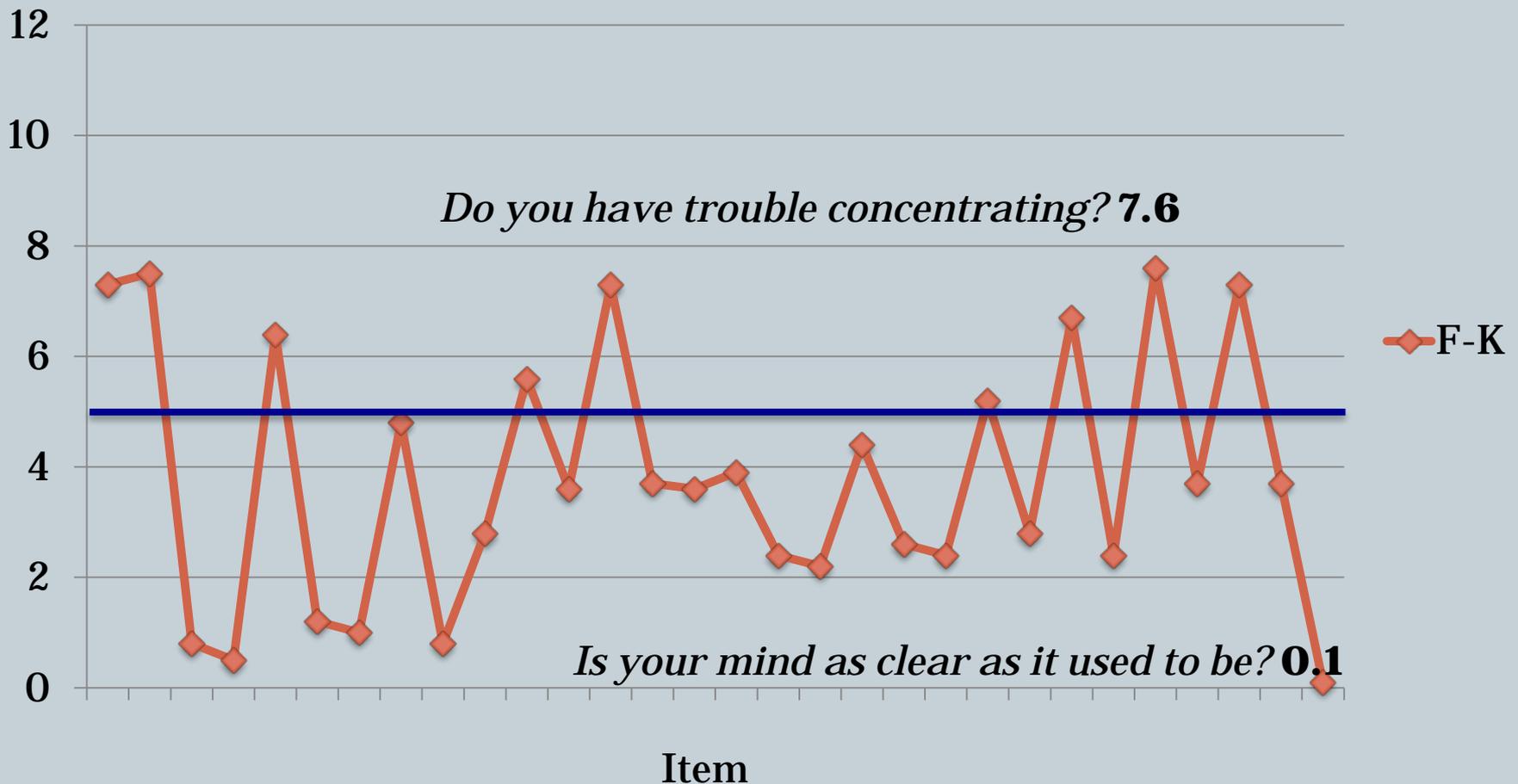
Methods – Cognitive Interviews

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- Cognitive Interviews
 - 30 individuals in 3 locations serving South and East Los Angeles.
 - mean age=76 (range 65-92)
 - 60% female
 - 37% had 6 or less years of formal education
 - 17% could not read 1 or both questionnaires
 - Retrospective probes in random order of questionnaires.

Geriatric Depression Scale - Readability

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Physical Function - Readability

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Geriatric Depression Scale – Cognitive Interviews

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- Participants commented: “Items were short and clear.”
- “YES/NO” were not sufficient response options for many who suggested adding options like “sometimes” or “most of the times.”

Geriatric Depression Scale – Cognitive Interviews

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Potentially confusing items:

- *Do you think that most people are better off than you are?*

Many participants were unsure if this item referred only to finances, or to health, or in general.

Item needing more response options:

- *Are you in good spirits most of the time?*

PROMIS Physical Function – Cognitive Interviews

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- Several items were considered long and confusing.
- Items that started with “Does your health limit you....” were answered “Not at all” or “Very little” by some people who commented they cannot do these activities at all or very seldom.
 - ✦ *Does your health now limit you in doing moderate work around the house like vacuuming, sweeping floors or carrying in groceries?*
Not at all; Very little; Somewhat; Quite a lot; Cannot do.

PROMIS Physical Function – Cognitive Interviews

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Items that were sometimes not appropriately understood:

- *Does your health now limit you in walking more than a mile?*

Relatively easy to understand, but most participants gave wrong examples of a mile.

- *Are you able to go for a walk of at least 15 minutes?*

One participant who answered “With a little difficulty” commented: “yes, I can but stopping several times to rest, I can walk 15 minutes.”

PROMIS Physical Function – Cognitive Interviews

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Items that were sometimes not appropriately answered because of the use of physical aids.

- *Are you able to run errands and shop?*

Without any difficulty; With a little difficulty; With some difficulty; With much difficulty; Unable to do.

- One person said: “Yes, with help of a walker with a little basket, and buying just 1 or 2 items, I can go shopping for groceries.” after responding “With a little difficulty.”

Conclusions

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- **Minority elderly may not interpret items in the Geriatric Depression Scale or PROMIS Physical Function in the way intended.**
- **Surveys need to be developed ensuring that this population can read and understand all items correctly.**
- **Surveys that are not culturally or linguistically sensitive may fail to truly capture the needs and conditions of particular communities.**

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