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Neuropsychological Considerations for Japanese Americans: An Overview

Zachary Maren, Ashley Heller

Liberty University, United States

Abstract

Objective: Japanese Americans are the smallest of the six largest Asian ethnic populations in the United States, yet face significant challenges when it comes to seeking proper mental health treatment and assessment. With challenges hindering the availability of proper culturally-sound neuropsychological measures to finding licensed neuropsychologists of Japanese-American heritage who are familiar with the culture, first-generation/native Japanese speakers face hardship when seeking ideal, culturally sensitive mental health care. The steady increase in the Japanese-American population calls for a more intent focus on developing and improving culturally sensitive neuropsychological measurements and raising awareness for this underserved ethnic population. It is significant to verify validity, maximize the comfortability of the testing situation itself, be mindful and address any testing biases, respect cultural norms, and normalize the testing process. When providing recommendations and discussing implications, neuropsychologists must understand their feedback impacts the patient's family often as much as their patient. Neuropsychologists are recommended to tailor gentle psychoeducation, emphasize patient strengths, and normalize their patients seeking symptom/treatment clarification.

Conclusions: Multicultural competent psychologists conducting neuropsychological assessment must be aware of numerous cross-cultural variables, such as generational status and acculturation in the U.S., to provide ideal neuropsychological services to the population. We recommend utilizing the use of culturally informed assessments, such as the Japanese Trail Making Test (J-TMT) and Keio Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (KWCSST). It will also educate on the need for more research on established neuropsychological measures to be expanded, normed for the Japanese-American population, translated for native Japanese speakers, and for more neuropsychologists of Japanese American heritage to serve this undeserved population.

Keywords: Japanese-Americans, mental health services, neuropsychological assessments, multicultural competency