Characterizing Social Behaviors Among Nursing Home Residents with Dementia

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Introduction

- Social interactions are important for quality of life, allowing nursing home residents with dementia to participate in activities regardless of cognitive abilities (Sherratt, Thornton, & Hatton, 2004).
- Few rating scales measure engagement and social interaction as opposed to problem behaviors, and interrater reliability may be a concern (Kinney & Rentz, 2005; Grathier-Jezes, Judge, & Lamp, 2000).
- It is also important to examine social behaviors during normal everyday activities in nursing homes to see which ones provide the most social interaction.
- The current study introduces the Oshkosh Social Behaviors Checklist (OSBC), a new rating scale for measuring social behaviors among dementia patients.

Objectives

- To examine the validity and reliability of the OSBC relative to the Greater Cincinnati Chapter Well-Being Observation Tool (GCC), another rating scale containing similar social indicators.
- To examine levels of social and nonsocial behaviors during different everyday activities among nursing home residents with dementia.

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Methods

- **Participants**: Inclusion criteria: Diagnosed with dementia; able to communicate verbally (self and others); 71 to 80 years old (N = 44, 11 females, 33 males); all Caucasian.
- Average education, 12.02 years (SD = 2.26).
- **Materials**: OSBC. The OSBC rates two types of behaviors, social and nonsocial.
- Statistical analyses of variance (MANCOVA) was used to examine whether social and nonsocial behaviors differed according to the type of activity residents were participating in. Activities were meals, TV or other passive activity, getting out of common area, hitting with others, and active group activity. MMSE was a covariate.

Results

- Interrater reliability:
  - OSBC mean kappa = 0.76
  - GCC mean kappa = 0.63

- Correlations:
  - Social behaviors on the OSBC were significantly correlated with MMSE scores, interest, sustained attention, pleasant affect, self-esteem, and normalcy (Table 1). Negative behaviors were significantly correlated with negative affect.
  - Age and education were not significantly correlated with any OSBC or GCC domains.

- Type of Activity Differences
  - Both social (F[2,24] = 30.69) and nonsocial behaviors (F[2,24] = 2.45) significantly differed by type of activity (p < 0.05).
  - Social behaviors were most frequent when residents were visiting with others. Relative to passive activities, social behaviors also occurred more frequently during meals and active group activities (Figure 1).
  - Nonsocial behaviors were most frequent when residents were sitting in common areas (Figure 2).

Conclusion

- OSBC had better interrater reliability than the GCC, and was easier to use.
- Finding support the convergent and divergent validity of the OSBC.
- Visits and group activities appeared to promote social interaction among residents with dementia. Surprisingly, social interaction was also more frequent during meals.
- Although the OSBC does not capture duration or intensity of behaviors, it appears reliable and valid, and could be a practical tool.

References