DIAGNOSIS

The self rating inventory for post-traumatic stress disorder may aid diagnosis among older people in the community


Q Does the self rating inventory for post-traumatic stress disorder effectively diagnose post-traumatic stress disorder in older adults living in the community?

METHODS

Table SRIP validity of criteria at different cut off scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRIP cut off score</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>34</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity (%)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity (%)</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive predictive value (%)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative predictive value (%)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

SRIP adequately identifies PTSD in older community-dwelling adults.

NOTES

Authors note that the low number of true PTSD cases is a limitation of this study. In addition, CIDI rules were applied very strictly and therefore may have missed sub-threshold cases.

MAIN RESULTS

Of the 47 SRIP screen positives, 41 were tested with the CIDI and 7 were confirmed positive. Of the 381 SRIP screen negatives, 7 tested positive with the CIDI. The weighted sensitivity of the SRIP was 22.6% and the specificity was 97.7% (for a threshold score of 52). The optimum threshold score was 39, which gave a sensitivity of 74.2% and a specificity of 81.4% (see table).

The work by van Zelst et al is one of many recent papers that aim to show the utility of a screening instrument for PTSD. Interest in this area is a reflection of increasing appreciation of the problem of under recognition and under treatment of PTSD. van Zelst et al have extended previous work by focusing on older adults (age 55–90). This is important because good psychometric information about diagnostic instruments for older adults is scarce. More broadly, it draws attention to the seldom studied problem of traumatisation of older adults.

This work suggests that the self-Rating Inventory for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (SRIP) can be reasonably applied as a screening instrument for older adults. Consistent with other recent work, these data suggest that scores lower than the cut off typically used in mental health settings may indicate a positive screening for PTSD. At 22 items, the SRIP is longer than other self-report PTSD symptom inventories (e.g., the 17 item PTSD Checklist) that have been validated for screening purposes. This, in combination with the use of trained interviewers to administer the measure, limits the feasibility of broadly applying this work. This study is limited by the exclusion of individuals with subsyndromal PTSD, which has been shown to be similar to the full disorder in terms of impairment and distress. This work is also limited by the use of community dwelling older adults because it excludes the younger individuals who may be at greatest risk; disability and cognitive impairment are risk factors for maltreatment among the elderly. Future work should focus on very brief instruments that can be applied to a fuller range of older adults, and cut offs should be identified for full and partial PTSD.

Ariel J Lang, PhD
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Commentary

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