

Abstract

Inaugural Poster Session
Hispanic Neuropsychological Society Conference 2019

Saturday, February 23, 2019 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

GENERAL STUDIES

A-8

Health Literacy is Linked to Executive Functioning in Older American Indians

Burks A, Avila J, Kaz G, Pacheco S, Verney S

Objective: Health literacy (HL), the ability to understand one's own medical conditions and navigate the healthcare system, is strongly associated with both educational achievement and executive functioning. Many American Indians (AIs) have experienced trauma in early education, such as forced removal into harsh boarding school systems; these experiences may impact their educational achievement, and subsequently, HL. Further, AIs disproportionately experience a myriad of chronic diseases. The goal of this study is to investigate the relationship between HL and executive functioning in older AIs. **Participants and Method:** Participants were recruited from a southwestern urban area, who self-identified as AIs, aged 55 to 80 ($n = 43$). Participants were asked to complete a series of questionnaires, interviews, and neuropsychological tests over two sessions, the second session was optional. This poster investigates the data from participants who completed both sessions. We created a composite variable of HL measures, (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine, Newest Vital Sign, and the Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults verbal and numeracy z-scores). **Results:** HL was positively correlated with both WASI Matrix Reasoning and WASI Similarities. Similarly, HL was positively correlated with Verbal Semantic Fluency (VSF) – Animals and Plants. However, there was no significant correlation between HL and VSF – Fruits and Vegetables or HL and Trails Making – B. **Conclusions:** These findings suggest that HL and executive functioning are linked in older AIs. Discrepancies between the executive functioning tests (VSF – Animals, Fruits/Vegetables, and Plants) may be due to resources, culture, and education quality. These findings highlight the need for further investigation of cultural context and the accompanying development of culturally appropriate measures.