

Scenario: Cognitive Assessment

People with dementia may be referred for an assessment of their memory or other non-cognitive complaints that may include personality changes, mood changes, or physical/mobility issues. Cognitive assessments, in particular, are useful for detecting dementia, informing specific diagnoses and helping people to understand/cope with their cognitive symptoms. These typically test mental abilities, such as memory or thinking, however, the assessment process is not always tailored to the needs of people with dementia.

Aims



To simulate how tests such as cognitive assessments do not cater to the needs of people with dementia.
To show how age-related sensory changes may impact a person's ability to successfully complete a cognitive assessment.

Learning Objectives



- To demonstrate how clinical assessments may fall short of meeting the needs of people with dementia.
- To understand that sensory limitations can make it challenging for people with dementia to complete assessments.
- To learn how clinical assessments may need to be altered/tailored to the needs of people with dementia.

When to use this scenario



Cognitive assessments may be completed at any stage of dementia, however, they are more common to earlier stages of dementia where people may begin to suspect cognitive or non-cognitive changes.



The scenario can be used with any type of assessment, i.e., occupational therapists may choose to run a similar scenario with an occupational health assessment. The core message of this scenario is to demonstrate how clinical assessments can become increasingly difficult for people with dementia with concurrent age-related sensory changes.



Equipment

- Adenbrook's Cognitive Examination III (available to download separately)
- Pen
- Headphones connected to a device
- White noise audio clip
- Stopwatch



Downloadable supporting materials

- Slide show
- Communication information sheet
- Perception information sheet
- Evaluation form



Helpful Tips

- You can increase the difficulty of the task by adding simulation glasses or covering the lens of an old pair of glasses with vaseline to demonstrate blurred vision.

Facilitation Instructions

Setting up:

Set up the room as if it is a clinical setting, with two chairs and a table between them.

Split participants into pairs; assign one as the assessor and one as the person with dementia. As an option, you may assign additional participants as observers.

Download and print the 'ACE-III Cognitive Assessment Exercise' from the INTenSE Platform and hand it to the assessor. It should consist of two pages.



Have the simulation equipment ready:

- Headphones/earphones
- White noise soundclip on a device ready to play

Brief:

"You are a healthcare professional/assessor and a person who suspects they have dementia. Now, you are both in a clinic and will complete a cognitive assessment to find out what might be going on."



15 - 20 minutes

Activity Instructions

1. Have the assessment (2 pages) printed and ready to use
2. Print and distribute the instructions for each participant
3. Have the equipment ready for both participants
4. Ask the person with suspected dementia to wear earphones before starting the exercise
5. Make sure that the white noise audio clip is at a level whereby the person can just about make out what you and the assessor are saying.
6. Ask the participant playing the assessor to familiarise themselves with the assessment and their role.
7. Outline that the assessor does not necessarily need to score the performance but should try to administer and follow the assessment as closely as possible
8. Tell them that they may disregard the 'Which' subsection of the first part 'Attention'.
9. Answer any questions the assessor may have before starting.
10. Guidelines of the assessment are available in the additional resources.
11. The full assessment is also available in the additional resources



Group Reflection / Discussion



- Did the participant who played the person with suspected dementia find it difficult to participate in the assessment?
- Did the assessor notice any difficulties in conducting the assessment?
- Is there anything that could make this process easier for the assessor and the person with suspected dementia?
- Did either participant come to a better understanding of how assessments may need to be tailored to specific needs?
- How might this process be changed or improved for people with dementia?

Additional Resources



Assessment:

- "ACE-III Full Assessment"
- "ACE-III Guidelines and Scoring"

Dementia and Diagnoses

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/diagnosis-tests/>

Cognitive Assessment and Dementia

- <https://www.alz.org/professionals/health-systems-clinicians/cognitive-assessment>