Project 2: Extending the Application of the WTAR

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Research Purpose: To extend the use of the WTAR to allow for evaluation of discrepancies between memory and intellectual ability and predicted premorbid estimates when the WTAR reading level is higher than that predicted by demographic data

Research Description: The WTAR was developed and co-normed with the WAIS-III and WMS-III to provide clinicians with an assessment tool for estimating premorbid functioning. Whilst the WTAR standardisation data cautions against analysing/interpreting differences between obtained and WTAR predicted WAIS-III and WMS-III scores when an individual's reading level is poorer than anticipated (a cautious interpretation can be applied with differences of -15 to -19 points but no analysis is recommended when the discrepancy is equal to or greater than -20 points), to date no data exists evaluating the impact of better than expected reading abilities on WTAR premorbid estimates, i.e. where WTAR scores are 20 or more points better than expected. Thus while there is a clear mandate for clinicians to be cautious about predicting premorbid estimates when reading ability is potentially compromised, no such cautions appear to exist for the clinician warning of the danger of accepting WTAR premorbid estimates based on higher than anticipated reading skills. The danger of basing predictions on higher than expected reading skills is that premorbid functioning in such individuals is likely to be overestimated making the false detection of a decline in cognitive functioning all too likely.
The aim of this project is to examine the conditions under which the WTAR reading level is higher than expected (i.e. +15-19 points and $\geq$ 20 points) and evaluate its impact on estimating premorbid functioning in individuals.

Participants: This is an archival study utilizing test data from the supervisor's medicolegal/forensic private practice.

Methodology: The data is from a medicolegal private practice run by the supervisor. The cases are adults (16-80 years) who have been referred by either Insurance companies, Legal Firms, Workcover, the Mental Health Court, or Health Practitioners Board for assessment. It is anticipated that there would be approximately 300-400 cases in the database. The student would not be required to gather any additional data (as in administer any tests) but they would be expected to enter data into a workable database.

Data Analysis: Data analysis will be quantitative employing correlation and regression analyses. The analytical procedures are a standard part of psychometrics and can generally be performed with a basic knowledge of algebra and spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel. The student will be taught the necessary psychometric analyses if they have not been taught them in their undergraduate program.

Student friendliness: This study is suitable for either an on-campus or external student as long as they are prepared to travel to the Springfield campus for supervision. The study is particularly suitable for part-time students who have already completed the Advanced Assessment course, given that there is an intensive focus on the Wechsler batteries and the necessary psychometric knowledge has been reviewed in that course. Initially supervision would

	be weekly/fortnightly (during the data transcription phase of the study) but once the data has been analysed this would likely decline to meeting fortnightly/monthly depending on the needs of the student. Students must be available for supervision primarily on Fridays and occasional Mondays.
Expected research outcomes:	APS Conference Presentation if student wished to submit would be a reasonable expectation for this type of research study
Further reading:	Initial reading requirements would be the WTAR manual.
Ethics:	Utilisation of this data has already received ethics approval in previous years. Continuation of ethics approval will be sought.
Resources:	Project able to be funded within $150 departmental limit

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