Cognitive interventions for older adults: the impact on daily life

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Cognitive interventions for older adults are designed to improve cognitive functions, e.g. to enhance autonomy in later life. These cognitive functions, and the effect of interventions, are measured by 'standard' cognitive tests, such as memory tests, processing speed tests and interference tests. The question, however, is whether cognitive improvement, defined by improvement in test scores, can be generalized to daily functioning. For instance, is an increase in memory test score related to improvement in daily functioning? In this presentation, some examples of cognitive interventions for older adults from the international literature will be considered. More specifically, it will be discussed whether the effect of these interventions can be transferred to functioning in daily life and how this generalization can be measured. An example of a measure of the generalization of intervention effects to the daily life of older adults will be provided. In this case, a large intervention study into the effects of ICT use on the cognitive abilities and autonomy of older adults will be presented. In this study, the technological transfer test (TTT) was designed to measure transfer of newly acquired computer skills to daily life. Data about the relationship between the TTT and cognitive tests (cognitive speed and memory) will be presented.

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