A brief guide to your neuropsychological assessment

Why do I need a neuropsychological assessment?
Your hospital consultant has referred you to us for a neuropsychological assessment. This usually means that they are interested in finding out how well your brain is managing certain areas of thinking, such as remembering, concentrating and problem solving.

We will carry out an interview and possibly some paper-and-pencil tests. These will highlight your strengths and weaknesses in these areas, and allow us to understand how any difficulties may be impacting on your daily life.

We may then be able to offer advice on how to manage day to day problems or put you in touch with other services that you may find useful.

If you have suffered a brain injury or neurological condition, an assessment can be useful as it may pick up any changes that may have occurred as a result, and what they may mean in terms of how well you can cope in everyday situations. A neuropsychological assessment can be useful to:
- Provide information for your consultant
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses
- Monitor your recovery
- Help guide rehabilitation
- Provide a baseline for follow up appointments

It is important to know: that just because you have been referred for a neuropsychological assessment does not mean that there is something wrong with your brain.

Who will do the assessment?
The assessment will be carried out by a clinical psychologist specialising in neuropsychology; this is a professional who has further training in the relationship between the brain and behaviour and is trained in the psychological assessment of brain function. Often an assistant psychologist will help with the assessment.

All of the clinical psychologists in this department are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

There may be another person observing the assessment for training purposes. We may occasionally video the consultations; should this be the case, your permission will be sought in advance.
What will it involve?

During the initial assessment the clinical psychologist or assistant psychologist will carry out an interview and then may ask you to perform various tasks.

The clinical psychologist may also wish to speak to someone, such as a relative or close friend, who has known you for some time. This is to provide any additional background information that will help us to interpret the results of the neuropsychological assessment.

A neuropsychological assessment looks at a range of different brain functions including attention and concentration, memory, visual perception, language and problem solving skills. These functions are examined using various tests such as paper-and-pencil tasks, solving a few problems and answering questions. The tests are designed to cover a range of abilities.

People vary a lot in their strengths and weaknesses so we do not expect you to do well in all tasks; we would expect you to find some tasks easy, and others more difficult. You should not worry about whether you will “pass” the tests. These tasks cannot be passed or failed instead their score describes how a person performs compared to a population similar in age, gender and background. People often find the testing interesting and enjoyable. These tests are different from the kind of procedures that you might undergo as part of a medical examination. They do not involve having a physical examination and we will not be prescribing any medication.

You do not need to come off your medication for your appointment.

How long will it take?

The initial assessment may take up to three hours, although in some cases it may be shorter or a little longer. Short breaks will be given where necessary. Any follow up appointment is likely to be shorter and may only take up to one hour.

What do I need to bring?

If you normally wear glasses for reading, please bring them along. Try to get a good night’s sleep the night before and eat well before the appointment. You may wish to bring refreshments with you such as a flask, some water and a light snack.

What happens after?

You will be given general feedback at the end of your assessment and this will give you the opportunity to ask any questions. We may discuss ways in which we can help you cope better in everyday situations. This may involve giving you and your partner some advice, providing you with some self-help leaflets or suggesting the use of various aids that may help your memory and concentration.

Once the assessment is complete, the clinical psychologist will score the various tests and write a report that describes your strengths and weaknesses, as well as the way that these may affect your everyday life. Such reports are usually intended for the referring consultant, GP or other professionals involved in your care. If you have any queries about the assessment or the results of the assessment, please do not hesitate to ask.
How will the results of the assessment be used?
Assessment results can be useful in diagnosis, monitoring your recovery from brain injury or neurological condition, or documenting changes over time. They can also help in the planning of treatment and rehabilitation. In addition, they may help us to give you further advice and suggest ways for you to cope better in your daily life.

Confidentiality
All of our staff are bound by a code of confidentiality. The information you share with us and the outcome of your assessment will be kept in the utmost confidence and only shared with other health care professionals directly involved in your care (e.g. your GP and your referring consultant).

Further information/contacts
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We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

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