Neurological assessment by family doctors in primary care setting

Ayman Mohammad Aboalam, Mohammed Ali AL-Shahry, Ahmad Mfarih Sharahili,

Abdulrahman Mohammed Assiri, Abdulrahman Mohammed Aqeel

Abstract:

In this review we discuss neurological assessment methods that can be applied by physicians in primary care. We outline certain basic concepts about the nervous system, the appropriate attitude toward neurological problems and patients. We searched following electronic databases (PubMed and EMBASE) to October, 2017. Search strategy targeted relevant studies to our main topic which is Neurological assessment by family doctors in primary care, using Mesh terms through PubMed as following; "Neurological disorders", "neurological disease", "family medicine", "primary care". Evaluation needs some general ideas about the nerve system and some skills in questioning and assessment, none of which are really difficult. The examination should be tailored to each patient situation; nonetheless, at a minimum, evaluation of LOC, habits and mental activities, pupillary indications, extraocular movements, and motor strength of face, arms, and legs. Additionally, a more detailed testing of CN has to include psychological function, cranial nerves, motor system, and sensory system. Even prior to the formal evaluation begins, the physician will have kept in mind abnormal facial expression, voice changes, abnormal eye motions, abnormal poses and gait difficulties. For example, the subtle changes of Parkinsonism

are frequently noted as the patient enters your workplace. The diagnosis of myasthenia gravis could frequently be presumed by observing the characteristic ptosis or the 'snarling' smile.

Introduction:

A concentrated background and physical exam of the neurological system might reveal vital information concerning a patient's condition. Factors for finishing a neurological exam include: identifying life-threatening problems, recognizing nerve system dysfunction and the impacts of this dysfunction on activities of daily living, and comparing present information to previous exams to figure out trends. A neurological assessment could reveal postural instability, muscular tissue weak point, balance or movement problems, or syncope syndrome, which increase the threat for falling [1].According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one from 3 older grownups (those aged 65 or older) drop each year at a cost of concerning $34 billion a year. Of these, 5% to 10% will certainly have a crack, laceration, or head injury [1].It is estimated that 50% of those over age 80 will certainly drop at the very least when each year [2].Those at highest possible risk have a background of falls, mobility troubles, and bad performance on schedule mobility screening [1].Although most neurological problems can be managed effectively by the family physician, many physicians have trouble conducting a neurological examination confidently, interpreting the results of their findings, or deciding what tests should be done.

In this review we discuss neurological assessment methods that can be applied by physicians in primary care. We outline certain basic concepts about the nervous system, the appropriate attitude toward neurological problems and patients.

Methodology:

We searched following electronic databases (PubMed and EMBASE) to October, 2017. Search strategy targeted relevant studies to our main topic which is Neurological assessment by family doctors in primary care, using Mesh terms through PubMed as following; "Neurological disorders", "neurological disease", "family medicine", "primary care". Only English language articles with human subjects were restricted to our search. Furthermore, reference lists of retrieved studies manually screened for more relevant studies that could have useful evidence to our review.

Discussion:

- **Cognitive Ability**

Ask the patient if they have the ability to drive, shop, and stabilize their checkbook. It could be necessary to interview caregivers or relative to identify refined adjustments in level of consciousness (LOC), behavior, slowing speech, or delayed response [3] Ecstasy is brought on by a modification in mind metabolic rate with sudden onset, minimized LOC, and sleep/wake cycle disturbance. Dementia is a chronic generalized disability of brain function, which affects

thinking, yet not LOC. Although dementia or depression beginning is gradual, delirium is a clinical emergency situation and ought to never be missed [4].

- **LOC and Mental Status**

Level of consciousness can be evaluated using one of numerous testing tools. First responders frequently use the Alert, Voice, Pain, Unresponsive (AVPU) range to identify if the patient is alert, replies to voice, to pain, or is less competent [5].The Glasgow Coma Scale uses 3 components (eye opening, verbal response, and activity feedback); each is evaluated using 1 to 4, 1 to 5, and 1 to 6 scales, respectively [6]. The Full Outline of UnResponsiveness (FOUR) range rates 4 parts: eye responses, electric motor responses, brainstem reflexes, and respiration pattern, on a 0 to 4 range [7].

When assessing psychological condition, evaluate the patient's look and their speech, along with cognitive function. Observe exactly how the patient is dressed; is the apparel on correctly and effectively fastened? Unilateral neglect may indicate a contrary side brain lesion. Examine speech and language for amount, rate, loudness, expression, and fluency of words. Note dysarthria (slurred speech), and/or dysphonia (impairment in volume, high quality, or pitch of voice). Broca's (expressive) aphasia includes nonfluent speech, which may be sparse, halting, and laborious. The patient knows just what they wish to say, however could not state it and may additionally lose the ability to reveal themselves in creating. With Wernicke's (responsive) aphasia, speech is proficient, mostly simple and easy, yet incomprehensible (sentences could contain random words). They may not realize they are utilizing incorrect words and may additionally lose the capability to read. International aphasia is a mix of both. All aphasias may reflect an injury to the brain's speech facility or a stroke [9]

A total evaluation of mental standing often needs a comprehensive interview process entailing the evaluation of: ideas and assumptions (consists of assumed procedure, thought material, perceptions, insight, and judgment); cognitive functions (includes positioning, interest, remote memory, recent memory, and new learning ability); and higher cognitive functions (consists of info and vocabulary, determining capability, abstract thinking, and constructional capacity). Instead of this, several practitioners use the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) to evaluate mental status. The MMSE uses 11 questions that examine 5 areas of cognitive function (alignment, enrollment, attention and calculation, recall, and language) utilizing a 0- to 30-point range [8]. Keep in mind that a rating of 23 or much less indicates cognitive disability. As it takes only 5 to 10 minutes to provide, it is functional for regular bedside use [10].

Table 1.Commonly used neuropsychological tests [11,[12],[13],[14],[15].

General intellectual function:	**Language:**	**Visual:**
Wechslr Adult Intelligence Scale-III (WAIS-III) Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT)	Controlled Oral Word Association (COWAT) Boston Naming Test (BNT) Aphasia screening exam Token Test	Trailmaking Test Symbol Digit Modality Test Cancellation tasks Tests of Variable Attention (TOVA) Symbol Search (WAIS-III) Useful Field of View (UFOV)
Verbal: Serial Verbal Learning Digit Span (WMS/WAIS-III) Letter-Number sequencing (WMS/WAIS-III)	**Memory:** Wechsler Memory Scale (WMS-III) California Verbal Learning Test-II (CVLT)	**Visuospatial reasoning and constructional ability:** Block Design (WAIS-III) Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure (ROCF)

Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (PASAT)	Selective Reminding Test Benton Visual Retention Test Memory for Designs Test Tactual Performance Test (TPT) Rivermead Behavioral Memory Test (RBMT)	Tactual Performance Test (TPT) Judgment of Line Orientation Test (JLO) Ravens Progressive Matrices Hooper Visual Organization Test (HVOT)
Brief screening measures/batteries: Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE) Mattis Dementia Rating Scale Blessed Dementia Rating Scale (BDRS) Neurobehavioral Cognitive Status Exam (CogniStat) Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS)	**Executive function:** Wisconsin Card Sorting Test® (WCST) Halstead Category Test Porteus maze test Proverb interpretation (e.g., Proverbs test) Similarities (WAIS-III) Abstract word tests Stroop (color word test)	**Motor speed and dexterity:** Finger Oscillation Test Grooved Pegboard Test **Psychomotor speed:** Assorted reaction time tasks simple vs. recognition vs. choice)

- **Examination of Gait**

The exact order of the evaluation is most likely inconsequential. It is better to analyze the patient's gait prior to any kind of formal cranial nerve, motor and sensory function examining. Regular walking, walking on heel and on toe, and tandem walking must be observed. Regularly, hysterical behavior is most conveniently noted throughout the monitoring of the gait. The patient without a gait disruption walks with a feeling of freedom engendered by the reality that most of

his activities are fairly automatic. It is thus extremely simple to identify variances from the norm. Specific patterns are well recognized and should alert the examiner to a certain type of problem. The 'upper motor neuron' lesion will certainly create an increase in muscular tone and will generate a 'abnormal' gait. When both lower extremities are abnormal, a scissor-like gait develops, as in cerebral palsy [16].

An ataxic gait is accompanied by clumsiness and uncertainty due either to lack of proprioception in the sensory ataxias or lack of control in the cerebellar ataxias. It is therefore important to comply with the tandem walking with the Romberg examination which aids to distinguish the sensory ataxias from the cerebellar ataxias. The patient with cerebellar ataxia will certainly be unstable standing on a narrow base, whether he keeps his eyes open. In the sensory ataxias, the Romberg examination declares. There is significant unsteadiness with eyes shut, yet reasonably secure position with eyes open. Some of the reasons for sensory ataxia are tabes dorsalis, spinal cord demyelinating diseases, polyneuropathies and spine tumors [17].

- **Cranial Nerve Examination**

The patient needs to currently be seatsed on the examining table at eye level so that the cranial nerves might be checked out carefully. In screening pupillary responses it is important to have a bright light. The direct and consensual reflex response to light should be noted. Keep in mind the near response, which includes miosis after modification of focus from a much to a reasonably near things. Note likewise any type of asymmetry of the pupils. The common pupillary abnormalities are the miotic pupil in Horner's syndrome, the myotonic pupil in Adie's syndrome and the various states of pupillary size in brain stem disorder, from the fixed dilated pupil in tentorial herniation to pinpoint pupils in pontine hemorrhages. The somewhat small, irregular pupil which reacts to near lodging yet not to light, referred to as the Argyll Robertson pupil, is

hardly ever seen in nowadays of antibiotic therapy. In the evaluation of the comatose patient the pupillary actions are extremely important, specifically in distinguishing coma as a result of a metabolic issue from coma due to a focal lesion. In the myasthenic patient the pupillary size is useful in differentiating a myasthenic situation (widely dilated pupils) from a cholinergic crisis (restricted pupils) [18].

During evaluation of exterior ocular motions, the eyes are taken via all the eye muscles' planes of activity i.e., abduction, adduction and upright motions in both the adducted and abducted positions. Watch specifically for restriction of eye movements as a result of weakness of private muscles or impairment of conjugate innervation. The latter is usually as a result of a supratentorial sore. Keep in mind any type of nystagmus. In the comatose patient the doll's head maneuvers are utilized to take the eyes via the variety of movement.

- **Examining the Fundus**

The funduscopic examination is the next action in the examination. The very first prerequisite is a great tool. The Keeler ophthalmoscope has numerous functions that make it my front runner. The expert design has excellent optics, along with an aperture control disc makings it possible to differ the areas of illumination on the fundus in the approximate ratios 1:4:25. With the tiniest aperture it is readily feasible to look through an identify student which otherwise can be extremely difficult because of light glow. Additional light should be omitted when doing a funduscopic exam. It is useful to have a convenient luminous area for the patient to concentrate on, to ensure that the examiner can note deviations quickly. If one always looks in the best eye first, one will certainly never ever have problem remembering which eye showed the irregular features [19].

In the funduscopic evaluation probably one of the most vital thing to note is the existence or lack of papilledema. This includes altitude of the disc, obliteration of the sharp disc margin and loss of venous pulsations. Early papilledema may just show loss of venous pulsation and obscuring of the disc margin. When hemorrhages and exudates go along with the altitude of the disc, papilledema is most absolutely existing. The vessels must be examined with special recommendation to arteriolar narrowing and focal restrictions as seen in hypertension. The examiner has to look out to the pale disc generally seen in optic atrophy. This is seldom primary; it is therefore important to determine the reason for the atrophy. Macular problems should also be kept in mind.

- Motor System Examination

The patient is asked to extend his arms with the wrists and fingers extended and to maintain that setting with eyes closed. Any type of drift or posturing of one or the other limb need to be kept in mind. Any kind of evidence of asterixis (interruption of muscle tone) is easily kept in mind in this setting. This may be seen in uremic encephalopathy, hepatic encephalopathy, C02 narcosis and barbiturate drunkenness. Any type of postural tremor or involuntary motions will certainly also become apparent [20].

Coordination is next assessed by doing the finger-nose test and the heel-to-knee examination. I generally prefer to do the finger-nose examination with the patient moving his finger quickly from his nose to my finger with his eyes open. To stress the patient the examiner ought to move his own finger much enough from the patient so that he need to move through a fairly long distance. It is also valuable to keep the supervisor's finger moving from place to location. With this technique the indications of cerebellar disorder consisting of ataxia, dysmetria and dyssynergia, are well demonstrated. A crescendo shake (usually a sign of cerebellar illness),

which ends up being ultimate as the end factor is approached, will certainly also be well demonstrated in this way. The activity tremor of benign crucial trembling must not be confused with cerebellar disease. It is monosymptomatic and has none of the various other indicators of cerebellar illness. The heel-to-knee test should be done with eyes open and eyes closed. The ataxia seen in cerebellar illness adjustments little whether the patient watches or not, while the sensory ataxia improves dramatically with the help of visual clues. Marked disproportionate ataxia in the low extremities in comparison to the upper extremities is typically seen in degeneration of the former brain secondary to chronic alcohol addiction. The alternate motion rate (AMR) must likewise be analyzed making use of pronation and supination of the hand and dorsi, and plantar flexion of the foot. This should always be done one hand or foot each time, considering that if done concurrently, one hand will certainly commonly 'lug' the other and therefore conceal any actual asymmetry. The AMRs are generally incoordinated in cerebellar disease but markedly slowed in diseases triggering enhanced tone. In extra-pyramidal conditions the AMRs are normally reduced however there is likewise a decline in amplitude of excursions in the finger, hand or foot, e.g. in finger touching.

- **The Reflexes**

The muscle stretch reflexes need to now be methodically checked out. I prefer to begin with the jaw jerk then proceed with the biceps, triceps, quadriceps and gastroc reflexes. Specific attention has to be paid to asymmetrical feedbacks, hyperreflexia, hyporeflexia and areflexia. A top motor neuron lesion will generally generate hyperreflexia, while the sine qua non of the lower motor sore is hyporeflexia. Loss of reflexes is one of the earliest signs of a diffuse outer neuropathy. Few lesions produce both a UMN and an LMN lesion at the same time. The one most frequently seen is amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, where atrophy and fasciculations are regularly seen in

association with hyperreflexia and extensor plantar reactions. Subacute mixed deterioration of the cord also generates a combined picture. Hyperreflexia in the upper extremities, areflexia at the ankles and extensor plantar reactions need to be taken into consideration subacute combined degeneration up until proven otherwise [21].

The Babinski response is generated by brushing the lateral boundary of the sole of the foot with a sharp things. The patient must be lying level with legs prolonged and relaxed. If the patient withdraws, it is in some cases useful to ask him not to move the foot willingly. Patients generally endure the examination much better if the supervisor begins with a light stimulation, increasing the stimulation up until either an extensor or flexor feedback is acquired. An extensor reaction is indicative of a top motor neuron lesion at any kind of degree from the cortex down to the spinal cord. Abdominal reflexes are additionally evaluated at this moment by gently stroking the skin in the four quadrants regarding the umbillicus. These are frequently lacking on the side representing the extensor plantar response and may be handy in ambiguous instances.

At some point throughout the motor system evaluation it is necessary to stop and very thoroughly watch the patient's muscles, looking specifically for fasciculations. The patient will regularly have noticed some twitching of the muscles if you ask about it. Fasciculations are generally a measure of anterior horn cell illness. You can also note the presence of muscle wasting at this moment.

Conclusion:

Evaluation needs some general ideas about the nerve system and some skills in questioning and assessment, none of which are really difficult. The examination should be tailored to each patient situation; nonetheless, at a minimum, evaluation of LOC, habits and mental activities, pupillary indications, extraocular movements, and motor strength of face, arms, and legs. Additionally, a more detailed testing of CN have to include psychological function, cranial nerves, motor system, and sensory system. Even prior to the formal evaluation begins, the physician will have kept in mind abnormal facial expression, voice changes, abnormal eye motions, abnormal poses and gait difficulties. For example, the subtle changes of Parkinsonism are frequently noted as the patient enters your workplace. The diagnosis of myasthenia gravis could frequently be presumed by observing the characteristic ptosis or the 'snarling' smile.

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