



## INTRODUCTION

# Introduction to the special section on positive neuropsychology

Patricia A. Pimental<sup>a,b</sup> and John J. Randolph<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Behavioral Sciences, Midwestern University, Downers Grove, Illinois, USA; <sup>b</sup>Neurobehavioral Medicine Consultants, Ltd., Elmhurst, Illinois, USA; <sup>c</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, Lebanon, New Hampshire, USA

While neuropsychology has a rich history of assessing, studying, and clarifying cognitive dysfunction, considerably less work has been devoted to understanding and promoting cognitive health. The field's historical focus on cognitive impairment is particularly notable in light of our patients' oft-stated interest in better understanding how they can maintain or enhance their cognition in daily life. Fortunately, there is recent evidence that neuropsychology has begun to embrace a more balanced perspective, regarding cognitive impairment *and* wellness. The present special issue is in concert with this trend to offer multiple perspectives on positive neuropsychology—the study and promotion of cognitive health (Randolph, 2013)—and to consider the value of such a paradigm shift to neuropsychology and society as a whole (Pimental, 2017). The issue's authors contribute to this emerging orientation within the field by considering cognitive health from unique and forward-thinking vantage points.

Randolph (2018) describes the origins and current status of positive neuropsychology, its foundation in positive psychology, and key empirically based domains as related to both clinical practice and empirical study. Since this orientation was codified five years ago, there has been much attention focused on cognition-promoting domains including compensatory cognitive and emotional strategy use, physical activity, social and intellectual engagement, nutritional habits, and preventative lifestyle choices. Exceptional cognition and positive outcomes in neuropsychiatric populations are additional areas related to cognitive promotion that are considered here.

Rabinowitz and Arnett (2018) provide a critical synthesis of positive psychology constructs as related to brain injury recovery. These authors consider characteristics such as positive affect, hope, resilience, and active coping tendencies and their role in psychosocial outcome post-TBI. Given that these phenomena are potentially modifiable, interventions that serve to

develop or enhance positive characteristics may ultimately improve rehabilitation efforts.

In an empirical study, Strober, Becker, and Randolph (2018) examine correlates of cognitive health factors—nutritional choices, physical activity, social engagement, and intellectual activity—with self-efficacy, well-being, and disease-oriented variables in a multiple sclerosis (MS) sample. Few studies in the neuropsychological literature have examined variables known to play a role in cognitive health in neuropsychiatric populations, and Strober and colleagues' study serves to add to our understanding of effects of positive lifestyle choices in MS.

Neuropsychology has experienced considerable growth related to assessment of performance validity and response effort, although Hill and Aita (2018) clarify an equally important issue: the positive side of the effort continuum. In their piece, the authors discuss constructs that may relate to positive effort in the neuropsychological assessment process, including conation, grit, need for cognition, and “Big Five” personality factors. Their perspectives on effort from a positive standpoint will hopefully inform future clinical and scientific pursuits in this regard.

In the issue's final piece, Pimental, O'Hara, and Jandak (2018) describe a broad-based service delivery model of cognitive health. They delineate various areas that can be incorporated into treatment including: brain stimulating activities, restorative techniques, automatic negative thoughts/maladaptive thinking reduction, inflammation and pain management techniques, nutrition and culinary focused cognitive wellness, spirituality based practices and mindfulness, movement and exercise, alternative/complimentary therapies, relationship restoration/social engagement, and trauma healing/meaning. Relatively few neuropsychologists utilize cognitive health interventions, and this piece suggests multiple avenues for adding such services.

We are pleased to provide varied state-of-the-art perspectives on positive neuropsychology in the present

issue. We not only hope that you enjoy perusing this issue's articles, but that you will also consider these perspectives on cognitive health in your own future clinical, academic, and professional work.

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