

INTRODUCTION: The Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) is widely used as a screening instrument to detect dementia in community studies.

OBJECTIVE: Validate a culturally adapted MMSE as a screening test to assess cognitive impairment in the elderly in Sri Lanka.

METHOD: 210 randomly selected subjects over 65 years from two PHM areas in Ragama were screened using the MMSE. Based on the results of previous studies the cut-off score for cognitive impairment was taken as 17 (maximum possible score=30). All 20 subjects who screened positive (MMSE < cut-off) and 20 randomly selected subjects who screened negative (MMSE > cut-off) underwent a detailed clinical and cognitive evaluation to reach a clinical diagnosis of dementia. The MMSE and other cognitive tests used (e.g. CAMCOG) were translated to Sinhala at the time of administration. Some items in the MMSE and CAMCOG were replaced with questions more suitable to our culture,

RESULTS:

Clinical Diagnosis			
	Dementia	Non Dementia	Total
MMSE < cutoff	18	02	20
MMSE > cutoff	01	19	20
Total	19	21	40

Sensitivity of MMSE - 94.7% (=18/19); Specificity of MMSE = 90.4% (=19/21)

CONCLUSIONS: The culturally adapted MMSE used by us is a suitable test to screen for cognitive impairment in the elderly in Sri Lanka.