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Personalising health advice: a pilot study

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Background:

Individual health assessments can initiate and maintain healthy behaviours. Nuffield Health, the largest not-for-profit health-care provider in the UK, supplies health assessments which profile the health of employees through tests and self-report questions. Currently, health advice is provided in a single format which may not impact on behaviours. The aim of this pilot was to identify psychological groups within workers in a large organisation in England to personalise health advice in future assessments.

Methods:

Mental toughness and cognitive experiential-self theory were used to identify individual psychological profiles. Participants completed the Mental Toughness Questionnaire 48 and the Rational-Experiential Inventory 40 prior to a health assessment. Latent class modelling examined whether these concepts produced meaningful psychological classifications.

Results:

203 workers were recruited through a convenience sample as they had volunteered to complete a health assessment. Two classes emerged: those higher (Class A) and those moderate (Class B) in mental toughness. Class A individuals favour rational thought, where Class B individuals demonstrate no thinking preference.

Conclusions:

Class A individuals, with a tendency to be more mentally tough, are adept at dealing with stress and perceiving challenges. Their preference for rational thought suggests that credibly sourced information would benefit their change motivation. Class B individuals tend to be moderately mentally tough requiring increased engagement to keep stress under control within their assessment. These profiles provide a framework to adapt health information in the workplace to individual needs. This process will augment message reception and enhance outcomes.

Key messages:

- Attention to psychological attributes is integral when personalising health advice to individuals in the workplace.

- Mental toughness and cognitive experiential-self theory provide a suitable framework for health advice personalisation.