# How accurate are virtual assessments of cognitive function?

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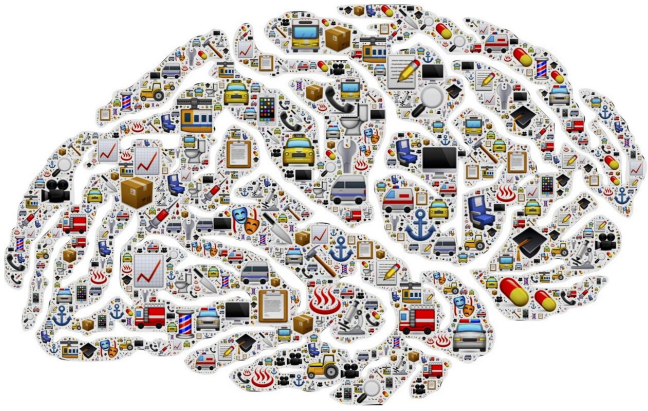

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Virtual care provided through telephone or videoconference has been broadly implemented in recent months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new analysis of published studies has examined the accuracy and reliability of virtual compared with in-person cognitive assessments for diagnosing dementia or mild cognitive impairment.

The analysis, which is published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, included 121 studies. Three studies comparing videoconference with in-person cognitive assessments demonstrated good reliability and accuracy of virtual cognitive assessments in diagnosing dementia. Investigators did not identify any studies comparing telephone with in-person cognitive assessments.

The analysis also allowed the researchers to identify virtual cognitive test cut-offs suggestive of dementia or mild cognitive impairment, as well as barriers to implementing cognitive assessments for older adults.

"Our results highlight serious knowledge gaps and challenges associated with implementing virtual care for older adults—especially when you consider that the majority of older adults continue to access virtual care via the telephone," said lead author Jennifer A. Watt, MD, Ph.D., of St. Michael's Hospital-Unity Health Toronto, in Canada.

**More information:** Jennifer A. Watt et al, Diagnostic accuracy of virtual cognitive assessment and testing: Systematic review and meta?analysis, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2021). DOI: 10.1111/jgs.17190

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