

Financial Security and Cognitive Health Initiative

Ashley Taeckens MSW¹, Jessica King Ph.D. ^{1,2}, Jennifer C. Greenfield Ph.D. ²,
Kim Gorgens Ph.D. ³, and Eric Chess M.D./J.D. ^{1,4,5}

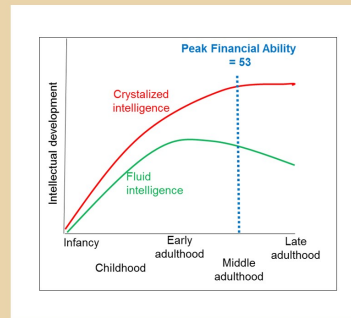
¹Knoebel Institute for Healthy Aging, ²Graduate School of Social Work,
³Graduate School of Professional Psychology, ⁴Sturm College of Law, ⁵Daniels College of Business

Executive Summary

In the United States, concerns regarding financial security and cognitive health have grown along with our aging population, which is projected to exceed 83 million people age 65 and older by 2050. Research has shown that those approaching retirement have significant fears of running out of money and losing cognitive capacity, which are borne out of the reality that the likelihood to receive a cognitive impairment diagnosis increases across the lifespan. Moreover, most U.S. households are financially ill-prepared for retirement. Further, older adults are frequent victims of financial abuse and exploitation, even through scams committed by those closest to them (i.e. family, friends and caretakers). Researchers have recently discovered that impaired financial decision-making (FDM) is the initial indicator of prodromal cognitive impairment and / or dementia. From this, the paramount intention of the project is to empower older adults—and adults of all ages—to proactively recognize the signs of reduced FDM abilities in order to combat financial abuse and exploitation, and effectively strengthen one's financial security. Both increased awareness and early detection of impaired FDM will serve to benefit millions of adults and older adults not only by protecting their financial health, but by preventing, delaying, and reducing the symptoms of cognitive decline.

Research Highlights

- Impaired FDM is the initial clinical marker of cognitive impairment
- Peak FDM abilities occur at 53 years of age
 - Crystallized intelligence - knowledge-based experience
 - Fluid intelligence - processing speed
- By age 70, 1/8 of the population has cognitive impairment or dementia
- By age 75, ¼ of the population has cognitive impairment or dementia
- By age 80, ½ of the population has cognitive impairment or dementia
- No practical or accessible screening tool yet exists for the general public to identify impaired FDM abilities
- Prevention and treatment regimens are most successful when initiated early in the disease process



Research Aims

- Develop evidenced-based, educational outreach to aging Coloradans which will influence participants to better recognize and act upon signs of financial vulnerability as they relate to impaired cognition and its associated risks of exploitation.
- Design a practical, publicly available assessment to detect impaired financial FDM with respect to cognitive impairment.
- Establish policy and protocols to bridge the gap between the financial industry and healthcare field to streamline prevention, diagnosis and treatment of impaired FDM abilities.
- Formulate a user-friendly algorithm to guide appropriate next steps after impairment has been determined, taking into account the complexity of dynamic, individual circumstances.