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Men with experience preparing meals show greater functional independence in mild cognitive impairment

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Objective: The purpose of this study is to examine whether experience preparing balanced meals is associated with functional independence in men with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). We hypothesized that experience preparing meals may increase one's "functional reserve", thus promoting independence across other instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).

Participants and Methods: Men with MCI were taken from the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI). We conducted ten Chi-square analyses comparing experience preparing meals (dichotomous) and difficulty on each IADL (dichotomous), assessed using the Functional Activities Questionnaire.

Results: No significant differences in age, years of education, and Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) scores existed between men with meal preparation experience (n=359) and those without (n=153). Chi-Square analyses found that meal preparation experience is associated with independence in the ability to prepare a balanced meal ($p<.001$); shop alone ($p<.001$); keeping track of current events ($p<.002$); remember appointments and dates ($p<.001$); follow TV, books, or magazines ($p<.001$); and travel out of the neighborhood ($p=.015$).

Conclusion: Given that preparing a balanced meal is cognitively multifaceted (e.g., requires planning, organizing, retrospective and prospective memory), shared neural networks may exist between cooking and other IADLs. These findings may have implications for identifying those at a higher risk for functional decline. For example, inexperience preparing meals may contribute to a lower "functional reserve", thus reducing one's resiliency to functional decline overall. Future replication studies are needed using a more sophisticated measure of functional reserve.

Biography

Konstantine Zakzanis completed his PhD in clinical psychology at York University, Canada and is a registered clinical neuropsychologist in the province of Ontario. He is a tenured Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and the Associate Chair of the Mental Health and Co-op Programs in the Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto Scarborough and a Research Scientist (Affiliate Status) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Dr. Zakzanis has over 200 peer reviewed publications and is currently an Associate Editor for APA's Neuropsychology and a Consulting Editor for The Clinical Neuropsychologist and The Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology.

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