NIH Toolbox for Assessment of Neurological and Behavioral Function

Many studies collect data on aspects of neural function, such as cognition, sensation, movement, or emotion, but there is little uniformity among the measures used to capture these constructs. The use of non-standardized assessment tools makes it problematic to compile and compare data across multiple studies. There is a need for concise assessment tools that can be used across diverse study designs and populations.

The goal of the NIH Toolbox project is to develop a set of neurological and behavioral measures that use state-of-the-art psychometric research and novel testing methods, which will be useful to researchers in a variety of settings. The end result of the project will be a set of integrated assessment tools for measuring cognitive, emotional, motor, and sensory health with enough flexibility to be appropriate for diverse populations (ages 3-85 years), settings, and study types, such as:

- large longitudinal and epidemiologic studies; and
- prevention or intervention trials.

By using the tools in the NIH Toolbox to measure neurological and behavioral function, investigators will ensure the maximum use of data from large, expensive, long-term studies. The availability of consistent, uniform data will increase the yield from these types of studies by allowing a greater number of research questions relating to neurological and behavioral health to be asked and answered. By creating assessment tools that can be modified or improved in the future, the architects of the Toolbox will ensure that this project is a valuable resource for NIH and the entire neuroscience community.

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The NIH Toolbox for Assessment of Neurological and Behavioral Function is a contract funded by the Institutes and Centers that comprise the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research. For more information about the Toolbox, which is operated by the Evanston Northwestern Healthcare Research Institute (Richard Gershon, Ph.D., Principal Investigator), please visit http://www.nihtoolbox.org.

October 2008

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health