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For decades, doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrists alike have struggled to treat the symptomatic effects of Huntington's disease. Huntington's disease is an autosomal dominant brain disease that results in the deterioration of a person's physical and mental state. Once a person inherits the disease, they end up dying from it more often than not. At present, there are 41,000 Americans with symptomatic Huntington's disease, and 200,000 more are currently at-risk of inheriting the disease. Given its 50/50 chance of inheritance, there seems to be no end in sight to this degenerative ailment. My research study, however, will show that with a more robust approach, finding a cure for this disease is possible. Ultimately, the aim of this project was to test an already established model in Drosophila melanogaster regarding the "huntingtin" protein responsible for Huntington's disease. This was achieved by first demonstrating that the flies which were modified to produce huntingtin could, in fact, produce the protein. Secondly, an experimental process was created to configure a system through which the amount of protein produced by each fly could be quantified. This quantification was vital in creating a baseline that would allow for the identification of potential therapeutic treatments in the future. In short, by establishing a quantifiable model for huntingtin, this study will pave the way to new insights on huntingtin aggregation and the identification of possible treatments for Huntington's disease in the future.

## CONVERGENT AND CONSTRUCT VALIDITY OF A CONVERSATION DIFFICULTIES OUTCOME MEASURE IN PRIMARY PROGRESSIVE APHASIA

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Cognition and language changes, and their impacts on functional communication, are central to many dementias. Thus, functional communication, including conversation difficulties, is an important endpoint for clinical trials. To develop robust outcomes in primary progressive aphasia (PPA), a dementia characterized by communication impairments, we examined the convergent and construct validity of the Perception of Conversation Difficulties-Dementia Alzheimer's Type (PCI-DAT; Orange et al., 2009). The PCI-DAT is a care partner reported measure of conversation difficulties. Eighty-two care partners with a mean age of 64.8 years (SD=10.61; 85% spouses, 5% adult children, 10% friends/siblings) whose mean relationship duration to the person with PPA was 39.1 (SD=15.1) years completed the study. Pearson's correlation indicated a significant, modest correlation (r=-0.54, p<0.0001) between the PCI-DAT Perception of Conversation Difficulties subscale and the Communication Effectiveness Index (Lomas et al., 1989) suggesting strong convergent validity. A Rasch analysis conducted on the same PCI-DAT subscale showed high person (0.92) and item (0.95) reliability indicating a robust overall scale structure that adequately evaluates various levels of conversation difficulty severity in PPA. Six items (27%) had minor 'fit' issues (defined by Wright and Linacre, 1994 as having infit statistics < 0.6 or > 1.4) relative to the underlying construct. Results suggest strong convergent and construct validity of the PCI-DAT in PPA and indicate items that will benefit from further development. Overall, our results suggest that the PCI-DAT holds promise for use as a functional communication endpoint in PPA clinical trials. Data for all five PCI-DAT subscales will be presented.

## COPING WITH THE SUBJECTIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN PUERTO RICO

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The COVID-19 pandemic poses serious physical and mental health risks for older adults worldwide. To develop culturally and contextually congruent services to mitigate these risks requires understanding their stress and coping processes, which remain understudied in Latin America. This study examines qualitative data from 51 adults aged 60 and over who participated in an ongoing study of older Puerto Ricans' knowledge, attitudes, and practices about COVID-19. Trained interviewers collected the data by telephone from January to August, 2021. Two-thirds of participants were female, 60% had less than high school education and 90% had poverty-level incomes. Drawing on Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, we conducted a thematic analysis of responses to open-ended questions about the nature and extent of COVID-related stressors, stress management, and meanings and guidance they had gleaned from their experience. Participants perceived the pandemic as an added threat to ongoing chronic stressors (e.g., Hurricane Maria, poverty, political instability); disruptions in daily routines, family cohesion, and grief and loss processes; and increased isolation and loneliness. They reported using cognitive, behavioral, socioemotional and spiritual coping, including positive thinking, keeping occupied, relaxation, religious practices and, in a few cases, social media. Participants highlighted a revitalized appreciation for emotional qualities of relationships, freedom and life in general. Consistent with our guiding theory, cultural, contextual, religious, and socio-political factors shaped their appraisals of stress and their coping strategies. Future research should examine how these practices relate to health outcomes and quality of life and how they can inform effective, appropriate interventions.

## COVID-19 SILVER LININGS - EXPERIENCE OF SPOUSAL CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA ENGAGED IN SUPPORT PROGRAM

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