

FUNCTIONAL AGE

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Functional Age: A Review of Current Research

Introduction

Functional age is a concept that has been gaining traction in recent years. It is an alternative measure to chronological age and is based on the idea that physical and mental capacities decline with age in different ways for different individuals. This review summarizes current research on the concept of functional age and presents potential implications for health and well-being.

Definition and Measurement

Functional age is defined as an individual's perceived or expected ability to perform activities of daily living, or ADLs, relative to other individuals of the same chronological age (Rabiee, Rezai, & Hosseini, 2015). ADLs are activities that are essential for day-to-day functioning, such as dressing, bathing, and eating. Generally, functional age is computed using several measures of physical and mental capacities, such as physical performance, cognitive ability, and self-reported health (Kanazawa, 2016).

Research Findings

Studies have shown that functional age can differ significantly from chronological age. For example, Rabiee et al. (2015) found that functional age was significantly higher than chronological age in a sample of elderly Iranian adults. The authors concluded that functional age can provide a more accurate measure of an individual's actual physical and mental capacities than chronological age.

Kanazawa (2016) examined the relationship between functional age and several health outcomes, such as mortality, hospitalization, and functional disability. The author found that individuals with a functional age higher than their chronological age had significantly lower risks of mortality, hospitalization, and functional disability.

In another study, Zhao et al. (2018) examined the relationship between functional age and mental health. The authors found that individuals with a higher functional age had significantly lower levels of psychological distress and better mental health functioning than those with a lower functional age.

Implications

The findings from the studies described above suggest that functional age can be a useful tool for assessing an individual's health and well-being. By recognizing the differences between functional age and chronological age, health care providers can better tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of their patients. For example, interventions designed to improve physical and mental

capacities should be tailored to individuals with a lower functional age, while interventions designed to reduce the risk of mortality and disability should be tailored to individuals with a higher functional age.

Conclusion

Functional age is an alternative measure to chronological age that is based on the idea that physical and mental capacities decline in different ways for different individuals. The findings from current research suggest that functional age can be a useful tool for assessing an individual's health and well-being. Future research should further explore the implications of functional age for health and well-being.

References

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