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# The Effect of Warning on Malingering on Memory and Motor Tasks in College Samples

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*The effect of a warning regarding detection of simulated cognitive and motor deficits on the Wechsler Memory Scale-Revised (WMS-R; Wechsler, 1987) and Grooved Pegboard (Klove, 1963; Matthews & Klove, 1964) was examined. Undergraduates (N = 87) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: simulators without warning, simulators with warning, and controls. It was predicted that warning participants that simulation efforts will be detected would reduce malingering behavior and this hypothesis was generally supported. Analyses indicated simulators with warning frequently approximated control group performances and were significantly better than simulators without warning on some measures. Stepwise discriminant function analysis accurately classified 57% of all participants. Results provide support for effectiveness of warning in reducing malingering behavior on selected measures and are discussed in terms of the use of warning as an adjunct to existing procedures, role of the neuropsychologist, and informed consent for assessment in personal injury litigation. © 1997 National Academy of Neuropsychology*

Malingering involves the fabrication or exaggeration of symptoms motivated by personal gain (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). Although cases of malingering have been clinically identified for many years, empirical interest has paralleled the increase in personal injury litigation and greater involvement of neuropsychologist expert testimony regarding alleged cognitive deficits (Franzen, Iverson, & McCracken, 1990; Matarazzo, 1990). The present study ascertained the effects of warning regarding detection of malingering through use of an experimental analog design with randomization, strict exclusion criteria, establishment of group comparability with respect to intelligence, and manipulation checks to ensure compliance with instructions.

Heaton, Smith, Lehman, and Vogt (1978) suggest malingering prevalence of cognitive deficits may be quite high among patients involved in compensable personal injury litigation. Hence, neuropsychologists are challenged with detecting malingered performances in a

variety of situations including worker's compensation, social security disability, and personal injury. In these situations, clinicians are mandated to demonstrate the validity of their opinions and support them through objective data, while also addressing the possibility of malingering.

The literature on malingering consists largely of analysis of test pattern performances of nonmalingerers versus suspected or known malingerers (e.g., Heaton, Smith, Lehman, & Vogt, 1978; Mittenberg, Azrin, Millsaps, & Heilbronner, 1993) and efficacy of symptom validity testing (e.g., Binder, 1990; Binder & Pankratz, 1987; Pankratz, 1979, 1983, 1988; Pankratz, Fausti, & Peed, 1975). However, some authors note that studying susceptibility of individual neuropsychological tests to malingering may not be fruitful because "there are no psychological measures that are not fakeable" (Rogers, 1988, p. 309). Further, although symptom validity testing is a promising technique, it is not infallible and may result in a percentage of false positives.

Accordingly, some authors have called for a focus on potential factors that may mediate, foster, or prevent malingering (Rogers, 1988). Such factors range from extent of information regarding common head injury symptomatology to the examinee's knowledge of information about tests used in the evaluation. Of particular interest for the present study is the effect of information regarding the examiner's ability to detect malingering on malingering behavior. For example, one study (Lamb, Berry, Wetter, & Baer, 1994) demonstrated that providing information on MMPI-2 scales served to lower some clinical scale scores and the fake bad validity scale in malingering of symptoms of closed head injury. This suggests that examinee knowledge regarding potential detection of malingered responses served to attenuate such responses. Lamb et al. (1994) concluded that "coaching can have an important impact on MMPI-2 patterns in analog malingering subjects" (p. 12).

Along related lines, warning subjects of the possibility of detection of malingering efforts on neuropsychological tests may reduce malingering behavior. From an operant standpoint, knowledge regarding the possibility of detection and potentially punishing consequences of such detection may discourage a litigating individual from exaggerating cognitive deficits (c.f. Axelrod & Apsche, 1983). Further, the behavioral assessment literature is replete with information regarding subject reactivity to monitoring. One logical conclusion to be drawn from this literature is that a litigating examinee, when informed that efforts to malingering may be detected, may reduce malingering behavior.

Research by Petrick, Wang, and Franzen (1992) is suggestive of the adverse effect of warning on malingering. Samples of head-injured subjects seeking and those not seeking compensation were compared on personality and neuropsychological measures and no significant between-group differences were found. However, the authors attributed this finding to effects of an inadvertent warning given by the experimenters regarding possible detection. Although this interpretation is intuitively correct, it requires further empirical study.

In pilot work, Johnson and Lesniak-Karpiak (1993) investigated the effect of warning regarding detection of malingered performances on memory and motor tests. The Wechsler Memory Scale-Revised (WMS-R; Wechsler, 1987) and Grooved Pegboard (Klove, 1963; Matthews & Klove, 1964) were administered to subjects asked to simulate head injury, subjects asked to simulate head injury but warned that simulation can be detected, and a control group. Analyses indicated that WMS-R Visual Memory, General Memory, and Delayed Memory were significantly lower for simulators without warning than for the control group. With motor performances, dominant hand performance on Grooved Pegboard was significantly slower for simulators than for both control subjects and simulators with warning. Importantly, no significant group differences were found between simulators with warning and the control group. Thus, results indicated that informing subjects of the ability

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