Westmead Post Traumatic Amnesia (PTA) Scale

What does it assess?
• Designed to measure the period of post-traumatic amnesia.

Who is it suitable for?
• Designed for patients with a closed head injury.
• May be useful for people with a history of psychiatric illness, developmental or intellectual disability, substance abuse, previous head trauma or nervous system disease - but its usefulness for these groups remains undetermined.
• Can be used with people with complex communication needs.

Who is it not suitable for?
• People with penetrating or missile head trauma, as well as the brain damage caused by hypoxia or stroke.

How is it administered?
• Speech pathologist or other hospital staff can administer it.
• Consists of 7 orientation questions and 5 memory items.
• Takes approximately 3 minutes for most people. May take up to 15 min for non-verbal patients.
• Has requirements listed for testing non-verbal patients - the examiner requires some skill and patience.

How is it scored/interpreted?
• A person is said to be out of PTA if a perfect score obtained for all questions, 3 days in a row.
• Once the duration of PTA is determined, the severity of injury can be classified.

What is its availability
• Guidelines are available from http://www.psy.mq.edu.au/pta/index.htm
• Picture cards (must use the original) and instructions are available from the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Westmead Hospital, Westmead NSW 2145

How does it contribute to a communication assessment for someone with behaviours of concern?
• Contributes to development of a comprehensive communication profile.
• Indication of the level of comprehension and reading ability will inform the type of behaviour supports that can be used.

References