

AGE-RELATED RISK AND THE EXPRESSION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS AMONG CHIMPANZEES

D.L. Durham¹, H. Ferdowsian^{1,2}

¹*Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Washington DC, USA* ²*The George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA*

Presenter's Email: ddurham@pcrm.org

Little is known about the role of aging in the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates, especially in the oldest age classes. Both normative behavior and pathology vary across the lifespan for human and nonhuman primates. Specifically, risk, etiology and sequelae of many conditions can vary with age as a result of development, experience and the interactions thereof. Here we discuss the role of age in the prevalence and expression of behavioral and psychopathologies among chimpanzees who were used in research before being released to sanctuaries. We assessed the frequency, severity and interference levels of several symptoms via caregivers' responses to a survey adapted for use with chimpanzees. These data were analyzed in the context of age and individual histories. In our analysis, age covaried with duration of captivity, a recognized risk factor for behavioral pathology among monkeys. Furthermore, the risk for certain behavioral and psychopathologies varied by age. The data also revealed differences across age groups for indicators associated with anxiety and depression. Results are discussed in the context of patterns observed among aging human populations. We also examine imperatives for early intervention and age-appropriate care for aging captive populations of chimpanzees. Further research is needed to examine how normative and behavioral pathology change across the lifespan and to differentiate between effects associated with aging per se and those resulting from prolonged captivity or other chronic and complex stressors. We thank the Arcus Foundation for support of this study.

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