Two Short Tests Fail to Detect Vigilance Decrements.

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Summary:
Deterioration in performance associated with decreased ability to sustain attention may be found in long and tedious task sessions. The necessity for assessing a number of psychological dimensions in a single session often demands “short” tests capable of assessing individual differences in abilities such as vigilance and maintenance of high performance levels. In the present paper two tasks were selected as candidates for playing this role, the Abbreviated Vigilance Task (AVT) by Temple, Warm, Dember, LaGrange and Matthews (1996) and the Continuous Attention Test (CAT) by Tiplady (1992). However, when applied to a sample of 829 candidates in a job-selection process for air-traffic controllers, neither of them showed discriminative capacity. In a second study, an extended version of the CAT was applied to a similar sample of 667 subjects, but also proved incapable of properly detecting individual differences. In short, at least in a selection context such as that studied here, neither of the tasks appeared appropriate for playing the role of a “short” test for discriminating individual differences in performance deterioration in sustained attention.

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