

The Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS): Recent Developments in Ascertainment and Scaling

Chair:

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Introduction

The Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS), as first published (Overall & Gorham 1962), consisted of 16 rating constructs chosen to represent the primary factors derived from factor analysis of the more extended Inpatient Multidimensional Psychiatric Scale (IMPS; Lorr et al. 1962). The availability of a large data base of IMPS ratings acquired from earlier, large-scale, cooperative studies of chemotherapy in psychiatry in the Veterans Administration (V.A.) made the background work possible. Thus, the V.A. collaborative studies research program deserves a large measure of credit for birth and nurturing of the BPRS.

The BPRS was designed to fill a special need in clinical psychopharmacology research, and it is perhaps little more than a historical coincidence that it appeared just when that need was being felt most acutely in programs such as the Early Clinical Drug Evaluation Units (ECDEU) of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Credit for the institutionalization of the BPRS belongs largely to the NIMH Psychopharmacology Service Center and its successor, the NIMH Psychopharmacology Research Branch. With the encouragement of program directors such as Jonathan O. Cole, Jerome Levine, and Nina R. Schooler, the brief and simple-to-use BPRS became a common intersection for much of clinical psychopharmacology research. By the time it was incorporated into the ECDEU data base, the BPRS had assumed a life of its own in the public domain.

The BPRS is certainly not perfect. There are items that could enhance its utility as a comprehensive description of manifest psychopathology. If we were going to add items to the list, "elevated mood" and "inappropriate affect" would be among the first considered. However, we believe that the loss of historical perspective would not be worth the gain. In fact, we did modify the BPRS one time. In about 1965, at a time when we were considering utility of the BPRS for descriptive classification research, the two items of "excitement" and "disorientation" were added. The confusion caused by that modification has persisted to this day. Despite numerous attempts to effect appropriate consolidation, there exist two BPRS rating scales: the 18-item version generally used today and the original 1962 publication that is still almost universally cited as its source. We firmly believe that the BPRS would not have survived had we continued to modify it.

In an effort to provide an appropriate readily available reference for the version of the BPRS that has been in the public domain since 1965, we have appended to these introductory remarks a facsimile of the 18-item BPRS. As we have indicated, this form has appeared in several previous publications; however, perhaps because those were not

co-authored by the two original authors, the Overall and Gorham (1962) citation persists. The confusion over citation would not be a problem if it did not occasionally misdirect a potential user to the earlier version. That is unfortunate because those investigators are effectively locked out from later developmental work that has enhanced the validity of the BPRS for a variety of purposes.

We believe that the development of new and improved rating scales should be encouraged. It is the purpose of this symposium to provide a forum for several recent developments. However, new instruments need to be distinguished by name, and they require individual psychometric evaluation that cannot be simply inherited. The BPRS, as it stands today, belongs to the hundreds of clinical investigators whose contributions have been thereon documented.

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References

- Lorr, M.; Klett, C.J.; McNair, D.M.; and Lasky, J.J. *Inpatient Multidimensional Psychiatric Scale, Manual*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1962.
- Overall, J.E., and Gorham, D.R. The Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale. *Psychol. Rep.* 10:799-812, 1962.

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BRIEF PSYCHIATRIC RATING SCALE
Overall and Gerham

DIRECTIONS: Place an X in the appropriate box to represent Level of severity of each symptom.

Patient Name _____ Physician _____

Patient SS # _____ UT # _____ HH # _____ Date _____

	Not Present	Very Mild	Mild	Moderate	Mod. Severe	Severe	Extremely Severe
SOMATIC CONCERN - preoccupation with physical health, fear of physical illness, hypochondriasis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANXIETY - worry, fear, over-concern for present or future, uneasiness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EMOTIONAL WITHDRAWAL - lack of spontaneous interaction, isolation deficiency in relating to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONCEPTUAL DISORGANIZATION - thought processes confused, disconnected, disorganized, disrupted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GUILT FEELINGS - self-blame, shame, remorse for past behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TENSION - physical and motor manifestations of nervousness, over-activation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MANNERISMS AND POSTURING - peculiar, bizarre unnatural motor behavior (not including tic).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GRANDIOSITY - exaggerated self-opinion, arrogance, conviction of unusual power or abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEPRESSIVE MOOD - sorrow, sadness, despondency, pessimism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HOSTILITY - animosity, contempt, belligerence, disdain for others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUSPICIOUSNESS - mistrust, belief others harbour malicious or discriminatory intent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HALLUCINATORY BEHAVIOR - perceptions without normal external stimulus correspondence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOTOR RETARDATION - slowed weakened movements or speech, reduced body tone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNCOOPERATIVENESS - resistance, guardedness, rejection of authority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNUSUAL THOUGHT CONTENT - unusual, odd, strange, bizarre thought content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BLUNTED AFFECT - reduced emotional tone, reduction in formal intensity of feelings, flatness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXCITEMENT - heightened emotional tone, agitation, increased reactivity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISORIENTATION - confusion or lack of proper association for person, place, or time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

