K10

Description

K10 is a simple measure of psychological distress, which can be used to identify those in need of further assessment for anxiety and depression. The K10 measurement of clients' psychological distress levels can also be used as an outcome measure and assist treatment planning and monitoring. The ten questions measure is designed to quantify the frequency and severity of anxiety- and depression-related symptoms experienced in the four weeks prior to screening.

Scoring

Each of the 10 questions is scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ("*None of the time*") to 5 ("*All of the time*") and scores are summed to provide a total K10 score. Questions 3 and 6 are not asked if the preceding question was 'none of the time' in which case questions 3 and 6 would automatically receive a score of one. Scores range from 10 to 50 with higher scores indicating a greater likelihood of having a mental disorder, or a higher severity of psychological distress.

Interpretation Guide

Score	
Under 20	Likely to be well
20-24	Mild mental disorder
25-29	Moderate mental disorder
30 and over	Severe mental disorder

13% of the adult population will score 20 and over and approximately 25% of patients seen in primary care will score 20 and over.

This is a screening instrument and practitioners should make a clinical judgment as to whether an individual needs further assessment for anxiety and depression. Scores usually decline with effective psychological treatment. Patients whose scores remain above 24 after treatment should be reviewed and further management should be considered.

References

Kessler, R.C., Andrews, G., Colpe, .et al (2002) Short screening scales to monitor population prevalences and trends in non-specific psychological distress. *Psychological Medicine, 32*, 959-956.

Andrews, G., Slade, T. (2001). Interpreting scores on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (k10). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 25*, 494-497.