



CREATING BETTER LIVES FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MEMORY LOSS

Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia

The Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia is recommended for use in the Memory Keepers intake process to assess depression. A Memory Keepers facilitator or another qualified individual should go through the assessment with the caregiver in person or virtually. It is recommended that the assessment be completed prior to participation in the Memory Keepers program to gather baseline information (pre-test) and then repeated after each 15-week set (post-test) to track change in depression. Findings can be shared with the caregiver. Memory Keepers program providers are encouraged to share findings with Memory Keepers, LLC following each post-test to help gather longitudinal data demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention.

Instructions for use: The Cornell Scale is a 19-item questionnaire assessing depression and depressive symptoms. This screening tool is completed by the caregiver of the PLWD. The administrator should tell the caregiver to base their answers on the past week of the PLWD's behavior. Each question is scored on a 2-point scale, 0 = absent, 1 = mild, and 2 = severe. To prevent a falsely high score, the administrator should score a "0" on section C regarding physical complaints if the PLWD is disabled or otherwise medically ill. A score above 10 indicates a probable major depressive episode. A score above 18 indicates a definite major depressive episode.

Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia

The scale is designed as a screening tool and is not diagnostic

2 steps:

1. The clinician interviews the resident's caregiver on each of the 19 items of the scale. The caregiver is instructed to base his / her report on observations of the resident's behaviour during the week prior to the interview
2. The clinician briefly interviews the resident

Total time of administration = approximately 30 minutes

For use with moderate to severely impaired elders with dementia

The scale is valuable to demonstrate effectiveness of interventions, especially antidepressant treatment, when it is completed before the intervention and several weeks after.

Scoring:

1. Each question is scored on a two-point scale: 0 = absent; 1 = mild or intermittent; 2 = severe; n / a = unable to evaluate
2. The caregiver is asked to describe the resident's behaviour observed during the week prior to the interview. Two items, "loss of interest" and "lack of energy" require both a disturbance occurring during the week prior to the interview and relatively acute changes in these areas occurring over less than one month. In these 2 items, the caregiver is instructed to report on the resident's behaviour during the week prior to interview, then give the history of the onset of changes in these 2 areas that may have taken place at an earlier item.
3. The item "suicide" is rated with a score of "1" if the resident has passive suicidal ideation, e.g. feels life is not worth living. A score of "2" is given to subjects who have active suicidal wishes, or have made a recent suicide attempt. History of a suicide attempt in a subject with no passive or active suicidal ideation does not in itself justify a score.
4. If there is a disagreement between the clinician's impression and the caregiver's report, the caregiver is interviewed again in order to clarify the source of discrepancy.
5. Older persons often have disabilities or medical illnesses with symptoms and signs similar to those of depression. Scoring of the Cornell scale on items as "multiple physical complaints", "appetite loss", "weight loss", "lack of energy", and possibly others may be confounded by disability or physical disorder.

To minimize assignment of falsely high Cornell scale scores in disabled or medically ill residents, raters are instructed to assign a score of "0" for symptoms and signs associated with these conditions. In many cases, the relationship between symptomatology and physical disability or illness is obvious. In some residents, this determination cannot be made reliably.

Screening Tool: Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia (CSDD)

Scoring System: a = unable to evaluate
0 = absent
1 = mild or intermittent
2 = severe

Ratings should be based on symptoms and signs occurring during the week prior to interview. No score should be given if symptoms result from physical disability or illness.

A. Mood-Related Signs

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Anxiety
anxious expression, ruminations, worrying | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Sadness
sad expression, sad voice, tearfulness | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Lack of reactivity to pleasant events | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. Irritability
easily annoyed, short-tempered | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |

B. Behavioral Disturbance

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Agitation
restlessness, handwringing, hairpulling | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Retardation
slow movements, slow speech, slow reactions | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Multiple physical complaints
(score 0 if GI symptoms only) | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. Loss of interest
less involved in usual activities
(score only if change occurred acutely, i.e., in less than 1 month) | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |

C. Physical Signs

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Appetite loss
eating less than usual | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Weight loss
score 2 if greater than 5 lb. in one month | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Lack of energy
fatigues easily, unable to sustain activities
(score only if change occurred acutely, i.e., in less than 1 month) | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |

continued on reverse →

D. Cyclic Functions

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Diurnal variation of mood
symptoms worse in the morning | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Difficulty falling asleep
later than usual for this individual | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Multiple awakenings during sleep | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. Early-morning awakening
earlier than usual for this individual | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |

E. Ideational Disturbance

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Suicide
feels life is not worth living, has suicidal wishes or makes
suicide attempt | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Poor self-esteem
self-blame, self-deprecation, feelings of failure | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Pessimism
anticipation of the worst | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. Mood-congruent delusions
delusions of poverty, illness or loss | a | 0 | 1 | 2 |

Scoring:

- A score >10 probably major depressive episode
A score >18 definite major depressive episode

How to obtain permission to use the Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia:

George Alexopoulos, M.D.
New York Hospital—Cornell Medical Center
Westchester Division
21 Bloomingdale Road
White Plains, NY 10605

OR

Elsevier Science
Subsidiary Right Dept.
P.O. Box 800
Oxford OX5 1DX
United Kingdom