Visited 07/25/2019

Mental Status Examination I

Definitions of Some Mental Status Examination Findings

Behavior

psychomotor agitation - noticeable and marked increase in body movements; eg hand wringing, pacing

psychomotor retardation - significant slowing of speech and body movements, lack of usual fidgetiness

Mood

Expansive - enthusiastic

Euphoric - feeling great, as if one just won the lottery

Affect

blunted- decrease in amplitude of emotional expression

flat - virtually complete absence of affective expression

constricted - normal amplitude but restricted range

inappropriate - emotions expressed are .not congruent with content of patient's thoughts (occasion# nervous smiling or laughter is not sufficient)

labile - unpredictable shifts in emotional state

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Thought process

circumstantial - organized but over inclusive, eventually gets to the point in a painstakingly slow manner

tangential - occasional lapses in organization such that the patient suddenly changes the subject and never returns to it; if a question is asked, it isn't answered

loosening of associations - frequent lapses in connection between thoughts

word salad - incomprehensible speech due to lapses in connections even within a single sentence; incoherent, a "tossed salad" of ideas

blocking - patient loses his or her train of thought; by definition, the patient should confirm the subjective experience of being blocked; the term should not be based on the interviewer's observation alone

neologisms - words that are created by the patient and have their own idiosyncratic meaning

flight of ideas - flow of thoughts is extremely rapid but connections remain intact

Thought content

delusion - a firmly held, false belief not shared by members of the patient's culture. By definition, reality testing is not intact (i.e., the patient is unable to consider the possibility that the belief is incorrect).

obsession - an idea that is intrusive and egodystonic; should not be confused with ruminations, which are egosyntonic, or delusions. By definition, reality testing is preserved (i.e., the patient will readily acknowledge that the obsession makes no sense.)

overvalued idea - a false belief not shared by members of the patient's culture that is not fixed (i.e. it is held to more firmly than one would expect but reality testing is maintained).

Paranoid ideation - (suspiciousness about others' motives) and ideas of reference (misinterpretation of external events as having particular meaning for the patient) are specific types of overvalued ideas.

Phobia - a specific fear that results in avoidance of the situation or object despite the patient's realization that the fear is irrational

Perception

illusion - misinterpretation of a sensory stimulus that can occur in any sensory rnodality (e.g., misperceiving billowing curtains in a darkened room to be an intruder)

hallucination - perceiving a sound, sight, taste, smell or touch in the absence of external sensory stimulation that seems indistinguishable from such an experience in reality

depersonalization - the sense that one is outside of his or her self

derealization - a vague sense of unreality in one's perception of the external world