

What's in your head? Study suggests a psychiatric self-test can tell you

Depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder Maybe you could, or should, just screen yourself for these conditions.

A study published online Monday in the *Annals of Family Medicine* found that a simple 27-item questionnaire shows promise in effectively screening potential patients for a variety of psychiatric disorders. That's the conclusion of researchers at the University of North Carolina who asked 647 adults at a family medicine clinic to test themselves while in the waiting room. The whole thing took less than five minutes.

In fact, write the researchers, the one-stop-shopping diagnostic tool called the M-3 (explained later) was as effective as screening tools for individual disorders. They're optimistic about its potential, especially in the primary-care setting, noting that many folks are inclined to simply consider depression or anxiety, not a profusion of possible diagnoses.

That's not to say a doctor would glance at a checklist and write a prescription based on the answers, but those answers could help shape effective followup inquiry. As the authors write in their conclusion:

"As with all screening instruments, the M-3 seeks to efficiently identify patients at high risk for one or more specific psychiatric conditions. However, while the M-3 increases the likelihood of identifying a patient experiencing a psychiatric illness, the M-3 by itself is not a definitive diagnostic instrument. Indeed, as a screening tool, the M-3 screen was more likely to identify a risk of psychiatric illness than was confirmed by diagnostic interview."

Here's the full study *My Mood Monitor* (hence the M-3 reference above). M-3 Information paid for the study.

Go ahead. Test yourself. (It's almost as much fun as the Patient Safety IQ Quiz.)

-- Tami Dennis

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About the Author

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