

POSITION STATEMENT ON THE USE OF RATING SCALES IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF ADULT ADHD

The South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP) Special Interest Group for adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) believes in the comprehensive evaluation of a patient by an adequately-trained and skilled healthcare professional, preferably a psychiatrist, prior to initiating treatment (which may include, but is not limited to, medication). The SASOP ADHD SIG recommend the use of the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP)/ Psychiatry Management Group (PsychMG) Management Guidelines for adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) published in 2017. These guidelines should be utilised in conjunction with other guidelines, as well as the responsibility of practitioners to maintain a high level of personal knowledge and expertise.

Psychiatrists use the diagnostic criteria for ADHD as pertained in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fifth edition) (DSM-5, 2013). The core triad of ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning. This is accompanied by associated behavioural, cognitive, emotional and social problems which can lead to work-related and interpersonal difficulties.

In the assessment of adults with ADHD, it is important to consider the history of presenting complaints, but also to use (semi-) structured interviews, rating scales, school- or work-related assessments, social functioning assessments and collateral information in the diagnosis of the disorder.

Commonly used rating scales for screening for adult ADHD include the World Health Organisation Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) Symptom Checklist, the Barkley adult ADHD rating scale, the Brown ADD Scale Diagnostic Form (BADDS), the ADHD Rating Scale, the Conner's Adult ADHD Rating Scale (CAARS) (DSM –IV), the Wender Utah Rating Scale (WURS), and the Wender-Reimherr Adult Attention Deficit Disorder Scale. Some of these scales are freely available, while some are subjected to copyright.

The clinical interview remains the cornerstone of the assessment process in diagnosing adult ADHD. Although various standardised, structured interviews

and rating scales are available, these cannot replace the clinical assessment, but can add some rigor, standardisation, and a quantifiable dimension to the areas being evaluated.

For the main diagnostic assessment, the use of the following structured diagnostic interviews may be considered: the Brown Adult ADHD Diagnostic Interview, the Conners Adult ADHD Diagnostic Interview for DSM-IV (CAADID), or the Diagnostic Interview for ADHD in adults (DIVA). A thorough interview is needed, documenting present symptoms and functionality across all spheres of the patient's life. Assessing for differential diagnoses and comorbid disorders are crucial.

REFERENCES:

1. Schoeman R & Liebenberg R. (2017).
2. The South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP) / Psychiatry Management Group (PsychMG) Management Guidelines for adult Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). South African Journal of Psychiatry. 23(0), a1060. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajpsychiatry.v23i0.1060>