

Delirium-o-meter: a new nurses' rating scale for delirium severity
De Jonghe JFM, Timmers JF, Kat MG, Kalisvaart KJ
Medical Center Alkmaar, Alkmaar

Objective: Delirium is a serious psychiatric condition. Nurses' rating scales can be helpful in detecting and monitoring delirium. The aim of this study was to construct a new, compact rating scale delirium severity.

Methods: Symptom or item sampling was based on the content of existing rating scales and DSM-IV criteria for delirium. If needed, items were reformulated following an expert panel discussion. The final delirium-o-meter consists of twelve items (4-point scale; 'no impairment' to 'severe'). Severity is elaborately described for each symptom.

In a cross-sectional design we performed a psychometric analysis of the delirium-o-meter. The database consists of 277 observations of 59 patients (repeated measures); 28 patients with delirium, 24 with dementia (no delirium) and 7 patients with depression or no psychiatric diagnosis. Most patients were admitted to a geriatric ward of a teaching hospital in the Netherlands. Also, a small proportion of patients was admitted to other wards and they were assessed by the consulting geriatric nurse. A total of 277 observations were used including repeated assessments. The delirium-o-meter was compared to other rating scales; the Delirium Rating Scale (DRS), Delirium Observation Scale (DOS) and the Behavioral Observation Scale for Geriatric Inpatients short form (GIP-28).

Results: Cronbach's alpha for the Delirium-o-meter was .92 and mean interrater total score correlation was .81. Two factors emerged from an exploratory principle components analysis (attention-apathy, 57% explained variance) and (agitation-psychosis, 10%). Differences between patient groups on the delirium-o-meter were highly significant. Correlations between the Delirium-o-meter, DRS and DOS ($r > .80$) and GIP-28 psychiatric subscale ($r = .38$) support its convergent and divergent validity. Preliminary data suggest the delirium-o-meter is also sensitive to behavioral changes over time.

Conclusion: The delirium-o-meter is a new 12-item nurses' rating scale for assessing delirium severity. Apparently, the scale can be objectively scored, it has good discriminative ability and data are in support of its convergent and divergent validity.

Jos F.M. de Jonghe, Medical Center Alkmaar, Dept Clinical Psychology, Wilhelminalaan 12,
P.O. Box 501, 1800 AM Alkmaar, The Netherlands, t 0031-72-5483090, e-mail
j.de.jonghe@mca.nl

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