

## CPD Online take-home notes

**The diagnosis of personality disorder in clinical practice****By Professor Patricia Casey**

Personality disorder is commonly seen in psychiatric practice, most commonly when it co-occurs with another mental health problem such as depressive illness, generalised anxiety etc.

The exact frequency of personality disorder varies with the study population and is found in 5-15% of the general population. Among clinical populations such as psychiatric out-patients, in-patients and those presenting to accident departments following deliberate self harm the prevalence is much higher.

It is important to consider this diagnosis in all patients since it carries implications for aetiology in some psychiatric disorders such as alcohol abuse and also impacts upon response to treatment and ultimately on prognosis. However, a diagnosis of personality disorder is also stigmatising and so this diagnosis should only be made after detailed evaluation of the patient.

There are dangers of over-diagnosis if the threshold for diagnosis is set too low as when only abnormal traits are regarded as evidence of personality disorder. It is also important to ascertain that these traits impact adversely upon inter-personal relationships and that they occur in a variety of settings such as work, home and social life.

When assessing personality in clinical settings it is important to obtain collateral information from a person who has long personal knowledge of the patient, especially when mental state symptoms are still present as these may contaminate the patient's own assessment of themselves.

Screening questionnaires must be used in conjunction with a detailed clinical assessment and structured interview schedules are mainly used in research as these are labour intensive.

**Reflection questions**

(1.3) Jot down what you believe are the salient features of personality disorder. List at least four.

(2.2) Can you think of some reasons for evaluating personality disorder in your day-to-day clinical practice?

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Zimmerman, M and Coryell, WH (1990) Diagnosing personality disorders in the community. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. **51**, 25-245. [[abstract](#)]

### **Screening**

Langbehn et al (1999) The Iowa Personality Disorder Screen

Moran (2003) The Standardised Assessment of Personality Abbreviated Scale (SAPAS)

Tyrer, P & Alexander M, S (1979) Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAS-Q)

### **Diagnostic questionnaires**

Hyer et al (1990) Personality Disorder Questionnaire (PDQ)

Millon (1982) The Million Clinical Multiaxial Inventory

### **Structured interviews**

Loranger et al (1985) The Personality Disorder Examination

Tyrer, P & Alexander M, S (1979) Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAS-Q)

Zanarini et al (1994) Diagnostic Interview for DSM-IV Personality Disorders (DIPD-IV)

Spitzer et al (1987) The Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID-2)