

Appendix K: Examples of Suicide Risk Assessment Tools

There are a wide variety of tools available that may be helpful in the assessment of suicide risk. Tools may vary based on the target patient population, the length of assessment and the applicability to different clinical or research settings. All tools have limitations and should be used in conjunction with clinical judgment. The following are provided as examples only and do not constitute an exhaustive list. The reader is strongly encouraged to refer to original sources for further information regarding instruction for appropriate use.

Example 1: The SAD PERSONS Scale for Assessing the Risk for Suicide

Source: Patterson et al. (1983). Published with permission.

The SAD PERSONS Scale for Assessing the Risk for Suicide

Sex
Age
Depression

Previous Attempt
Ethanol Abuse
Rational Thinking Loss
Social Supports Lacking
Organized plan
No spouse
Sickness

One point is scored for each item deemed present.

The total score thus ranges from 0 (very little risk) to 10 (very high risk).

Example 2: Nurses' Global Assessment of Suicide Risk (NGASR)

Source: Cutcliffe & Barker (2004). Published with permission.

Nurses' Global Assessment of Suicide Risk (NGASR)

Predictor Variable	Value
Presence/Influence of hopelessness	3
Recent stressful life event (e.g. job loss, financial worries, pending court action)	1
Evidence of persecutory voices/beliefs	1
Evidence of depression/loss of interest or loss of pleasure	3
Evidence of withdrawal	1
Warning of suicidal intent	1
Evidence of a plan to commit suicide	3
Family history of serious psychiatric problems or suicide	1
Recent bereavement or relationship breakdown	3
History of psychosis	1
Widow/Widower	1
Prior suicide attempt	3
History of socio-economic deprivation	1
History of alcohol and/or alcohol misuse	1
Presence of terminal illness	1
Total	
<p>Levels of risk and corresponding suggested levels of engagement:*</p> <p>Score of five or less: Low level or risk estimated. Suggested level of engagement – Level Four</p> <p>Score between six and eight: Intermediate level of risk. Suggested level of engagement – Level Three</p> <p>Score between nine and 11: High level of risk. Suggested level of engagement – Level Two</p> <p>Score of 12 or more: Very high level of risk. Suggested level of engagement – Level One</p>	

***Note:**

Levels of Engagement (Barker & Buchanan-Barker, 2005)

Level Four: Engagement on a structured daily basis

Level Three: Formal engagement at least three times per day – morning, afternoon and evening

Level Two: Regular support (e.g. approximately every 15 minutes, varying between 10 and 20 minutes) from the nursing team throughout the day or night

Level One: Constant access to a nurse, or other professional for support

Example 3: Examples of Measures Used in Clinical and/or Research Settings

Beck Depression Inventory

Beck, A. T., Ward, C. H., Mendelson, M., Mock, J., & Erbaugh, J. (1961). An inventory for measuring depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 4, 561-571.

Beck Hopelessness Scale

Beck, A. T., Weissman, A., Lester, D., & Trexler, L. (1974). The measurement of pessimism: The Hopelessness Scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 861-865.

Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation

Beck, A. T., Kovacs, M., & Weissman, A. (1979). Assessment of suicidal intention: The Scale for Suicide Ideation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 47, 343-352.

Hamilton Depression Inventory

Hamilton, M. (1960). A rating scale for depression. *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, 23, 56-62.

Reasons for Living Inventory

Linehan, M., Goodstein, J., Nielsen, S., & Chiles, J. (1983). Reasons for staying alive when you are thinking of killing yourself: the Reasons for Living Inventory. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 51, 276-286.

