

Biometrics Research

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Overview

The work of the department focuses on improving psychiatric classification, criteria for psychiatric diagnosis, and the development of standardized instruments for evaluating psychopathology.

Current Research

Drs. Spitzer and Williams continue their collaboration with Drs. Kurt Kroenke (Regenstrief Institute) and Bernd Loewe (University of Heidelberg) to develop measures for anxiety and depression, utilizing several large primary care data sets. In a sample of over two thousand primary care patients, they developed and validated an ultra-brief self-report composite scale to identify probable cases of anxiety and depression. A two-item anxiety scale had good operating characteristics for screening for the most common anxiety disorders. These two anxiety items were combined with two well-validated depression items to constitute the Patient Health Questionnaire for Depression and Anxiety (PHQ-4). Increasing PHQ-4 scores were strongly associated with functional impairment, disability days, and health care use. Anxiety had a substantial effect on functional status that was independent of depression. The PHQ-4 appears to be a valid and ultra-brief tool for detecting both of these conditions.

Dr. Williams is working with colleagues on new models of training raters in clinical trials. She has continued her work with an international collaborative group testing a reformulation of the Hamilton Depression Scale, the GRID-HAMD, and developing a new rating scale for depression. She is also a section editor for the 2nd edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Handbook on Psychiatric Measures.

Dr. First continues to be centrally involved in the research planning stages of the DSM-V revision process. He is co-principal investigator and a member of the Steering Committee overseeing the NIMH/NIDA/NIAAA-funded DSM-V/ICD-11 diagnostic research conference co-operative agreement, and he is involved in the planning and execution of each of the conferences. The 11 diagnostic conferences (three per year) aim to review the current literature and establish research agendas to stimulate research for the DSM-V revision process and beyond. Dr. First is also Director of the DSM-V Prelude Web-Based project, a web site established for the purpose of keeping the public informed about ongoing DSM-V developments and to allow for the submission of suggestions and proposals about DSM-V. Dr. First is also on the editorial committee for the DSM-ID, a diagnostic manual being developed by the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD), which is adapting the DSM criteria for the developmentally disabled. Dr. First continues his efforts overseeing the ongoing maintenance of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR (SCID), the structured diagnostic interview most widely used by psychiatric researchers in the United States. Dr. First is

also co-editor of the 2nd edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Handbook on Psychiatric Measures.

Awards/Honors

Dr. Williams was awarded the Knee/Wittman Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award in Health & Mental Health Policy and Practice from the National Association of Social Workers Foundation. She also served as Vice President of the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research.

Drs. Spitzer, Williams, and First, and Ms. Gibbon published the *DSM-IV-TR Case Book, Vol. 2: Experts Tell How They Treated Their Own Patients*.

Drs. Spitzer and Williams' analysis of a large primary care data set has yielded several indices that have been shown to have construct, procedural, and concurrent validity. These indices, like the PHQ-9, should be of great help to clinicians and researchers.

Dr. Michael First is directing the DSM-V Prelude Project (web site) and is on the steering committee of the DSM-V/ICD-11 research planning conferences.

Publications

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Spitzer RL, First MB. Classification of psychiatric disorders. *JAMA* Oct 19;294(15):1898-9, 2005

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