TWO BRIEF SCREENS FOR ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION IN THE PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Maia S Rutman, MD¹, Edmond Shenassa, ScD², Thomas Chun, MD¹ and Bruce Becker, MD, MPH¹.

¹Emergency Medicine, Brown Medical School, Providence, RI, United States and ²Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine, Brown Medical School, Providence, RI.
BACKGROUND:

Depression is a common psychiatric problem for adolescents. Nevertheless, adolescents are rarely formally screened for depression when being treated in the Pediatric Emergency Department (PED).

OBJECTIVE:

We examined the sensitivity and specificity of one- and two-question instruments to screen for depression in adolescents in the PED.

DESIGN/METHODS:

Cross-sectional study of a convenience sample of adolescents 12-17 years of age presenting to an urban PED with sub-critical illness or injury between 4/05 and 11/05. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and three depression screens: the Yale-Brown one-question instrument, a two-question case finding instrument for depression that has been validated in adults (Figure 1), and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies 20-question screen (CESD). Data was analyzed using SPSS®.

Figure 1: One and Two-Question Instruments

One-Question Instrument: Do you often feel sad or depressed?

Two-Question Instrument, Question 1: During the past month, have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

Two-Question Instrument, Question 2: During the past month, have you often been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?

RESULTS:

One hundred and eighty one patients were approached, of whom 130 (72%) agreed to be screened. Forty-six (35%) of the 130 study participants screened positive on the CESD using a cutoff score of ≥16. A “yes” response to the one-question instrument had a sensitivity of 65% and specificity of 94% as compared to the CESD, while a “yes” response to one or both questions of the two-question instrument had a sensitivity of 76% and specificity of 86% as compared to the CESD (Table 1).

Table 1: Performance of brief screens compared with CESD

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<tr>
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<th>Sensitivity, % (95%CI)</th>
<th>Specificity, % (95%CI)</th>
<th>Positive Predictive Value, % (95%CI)</th>
<th>Negative Predictive Value, % (95%CI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-question screen</td>
<td>54 (40-88)</td>
<td>94 (89-99)</td>
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CONCLUSIONS:

The two-question instrument is sensitive and specific for detecting depression in adolescents being treated in the PED. This screen takes less than one minute to administer, and is a practical addition to patient evaluation in the PED setting.