

Using the DSM-5 Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) Screener and Symptom Checklist

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ADHD in Adults Newsletter
Volume 1, No. 1

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Introduction:

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter on Using the DSM-5 Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) Screener and Symptom Checklist. These newsletters will provide information and access to the ASRS, along with information about its reliability and validity and how it should be used in clinical settings. The newsletters will all have a similar structure:

1. Useful information about the DSM-5 ASRS Symptom Checklist and Screener
2. Interview with an expert on how to use the DSM-5 Adult symptom scale and screener
3. Review of a seminal article about the DSM-5 ASRS Symptom Checklist and Screener
4. Use of the ASRS Symptom Checklist and Screener in a clinical case study, which will begin in our second newsletter

We hope that you find the newsletters helpful in furthering your understanding of the DSM-5 ASRS Screener and Symptom Checklist and your utilizing the scales in your clinical practice.

The current newsletter will focus on the development of the ASRS Symptom Checklist (symptom inventory) and DSM-IV Screener. The topic of the next newsletter will be the DSM-5 version of the ASRS Screener.



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Background:

The DSM-5 ASRS Screener was developed to update the DSM-IV ASRS v1.1 Screener so that it would be compliant with the new diagnostic criteria in DSM-5(1). The DSM-IV version of the ASRS was in two samples – a community sample (the National Comorbidity Sample-Revisited (NCS-R)) and a sample of patients in a managed care plan.(2) There are 18 symptoms of ADHD in both DSM-IV and DSM-5, which were originally developed for children. DSM-IV did not explain how these symptoms might present for an adult with ADHD. DSM-5 provides examples of questions to ask for understanding the adult presentation of the disorder.(1,3). There are 9 Inattentive (IA) and 9 hyperactive-Impulsive symptoms (HI) in both versions, which are listed below.(1,3)

DSM-5 ADHD 18-Symptom Criteria

Inattention criteria:

1. Inattention to details/ makes careless mistakes
2. Difficulty sustaining attention
3. Seems not to listen
4. Fails to finish tasks
5. Difficulty organizing
6. Avoids tasks requiring sustained attention
7. Loses things
8. Easily distracted
9. Forgetful

Hyperactivity/Impulsivity criteria:

1. Fidgets
2. Unable to stay seated
3. Inappropriate running/climbing (feels restless, in teens)
4. Difficulty in engaging in leisure activities quietly
5. "On the go"
6. Talks excessively
7. Blurts out answer before question is finished
8. Difficulty awaiting turn
9. Interrupts or intrudes on others

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The investigators establishing the ASRS v1.1 Screener first converted these 18 ADHD symptoms into language relevant to how an adult would present. They also created a context basis for the symptoms, to facilitate self-ratings by the patient. An example of this is that inattention is not just questioned as inattention, but rather as “How often do you have difficulty keeping your attention when you are doing boring or repetitive work?”; the context basis to the question is important as it is well documented that ADHD symptoms are more prominent when children or adults with ADHD are performing tasks that are uninteresting or boring. Additionally, the frequency format of “How often” allows the scale to be rated on frequency basis of 0-4 : “0 – never”; “1-rarely”; “2-sometimes”, “3-often”; “4-very often” – creating a scale with a range of 0-54 (based on 18 items). The ASRS Symptom Checklist items, which are all rated 0-4 are noted below.

Inattentive (IA) Symptom Questions

ASRS v1.1 Symptom Checklist: IA

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1 How often do you have trouble wrapping up the final details of a project, once the challenging parts have been done?	0	1	2	3	4
2 How often do you have difficulty getting things in order when you have to do a task that requires organization?	0	1	2	3	4
3 How often do you have problems remembering appointments or obligations?	0	1	2	3	4
4 When you have a task that requires a lot of thought, how often do you avoid or delay getting started?	0	1	2	3	4
5 How often do you make careless mistakes when you have to work on a boring or difficult project?	0	1	2	3	4
6 How often do you have difficulty keeping your attention when you are doing boring or repetitive work?	0	1	2	3	4
7 How often do you have difficulty concentrating on what people say to you, even when they are speaking to you directly?	0	1	2	3	4
8 How often do you misplace or have difficulty finding things at home or at work?	0	1	2	3	4
9 How often are you distracted by activity or noise around you?	0	1	2	3	4

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Hyperactive (HI) Symptom Questions

ASRS v1.1 Symptom Checklist: HI

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
How often do you fidget or squirm with your hands or feet when you have to sit down for a long time?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you feel overly active and compelled to do things, like you were driven by a motor?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you leave your seat in meetings or other situations in which you are expected to remain seated?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you feel restless or fidgety?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you have difficulty unwinding and relaxing when you have time to yourself?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you find yourself talking too much when you are in social situations?	0	1	2	3	4
When you're in a conversation, how often do you find yourself finishing the sentences of the people you are talking to, before they can finish them themselves?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you have difficulty waiting your turn in situations when turn-taking is required?	0	1	2	3	4
How often do you interrupt others when they are busy?	0	1	2	3	4

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Kessler et al. then identified individuals with and without adult ADHD based on the Adult ADHD Clinician Diagnostic Scale (ACDS) v1.2 and also had them complete the DSM-5 ASRS.(4).

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The diagnosis of ADHD in DSM-IV is predicated on fulfilling **four major criteria** noted below: 1) sufficient significant current symptoms (more than six of nine inattentive and/ or more than six of nine hyperactive-impulsive) present for at least six months, 2) significant impairment in at least two of three domains of an individual's life (home, school/work, social), 3) significant symptom onset prior to the age of 7 years and 4) being certain that the symptoms and impairments were from ADHD and not another mental health disorder. (1)

Kessler and co-workers then used psychometric analyses to establish the best number and best items for a screener to identify individuals at risk for adult ADHD. The optimal screener contained six items – four inattentive and two hyperactive-impulsive.

ADHD: DSM-IV Criteria

- A. Symptoms must be present for past 6 months
- B. Some symptoms present before 7 years of age
- C. Some impairment from symptoms must be present present in 2 or more settings (eg. school and home)
- D. Significant impairment: social, academic or occupational
- E. Exclude other mental disorders

You can access the article validating the ASRS [here](#).

You can download a copy of the ASRS V1.1 DSM-IV screener [here](#): **

****Note** - the DSM-IV is still available, but the psychometric characteristics of the DSM-5 Screener are superior and the DSM-5 Screener is now available for download and has been validated based on the newer DSM-5 criteria. You can get access to the NEW DSM-5 Online Screener for FREE and for use by you and staff in your office. See the end of this newsletter.

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The screener itself has six items derived from the 18 items items in the DSM. Significant items are defined at a level of sometimes or higher frequency and individuals screen positive if they have four or more items significantly (in the shaded area). (4)

ASRS Screener v1.1 – Part A

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Inattention					
1. How often do you have trouble wrapping up the fine details of a project once the challenging parts have been done?	0	1	2*	3*	4*
2. How often do you have difficulty getting things in order when you have to do a task that requires organization?	0	1	2*	3*	4*
3. When you have a task that requires a lot of thought, how often do you avoid or delay getting started?	0	1	2	3*	4*
4. How often do you have problems remembering appointments or obligations?	0	1	2*	3*	4*
Hyperactivity-Impulsivity					
5. How often do you fidget or squirm with your hands or your feet when you have to sit down for a long time?	0	1	2	3*	4*
6. How often do you feel overly active and compelled to do things, like you were driven by a motor?	0	1	2	3*	4*

Kessler and co-workers found high levels of sensitivity and specificity for the DSM-IV version of the screener(4), with the higher level of specificity deemed appropriate as the authors wanted to avoid false positive screens. Of note, the authors stressed that, like any screening tool, the ASRS screener identifies individuals at risk for adult ADHD for further evaluation.

The ASRS screener should not be used alone to make a diagnosis of ADHD. Those who screen positive need a full diagnostic evaluation. The screener is intended to identify and direct resources toward those at risk for the disorder. To establish the diagnosis of ADHD, nothing replaces a careful, thorough longitudinal evaluation by a clinician.

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In our next newsletter, we will discuss the updated, new DSM-5 Screener which is available for use in your office using online technology. **Apply today for access.**

The NEW DSM-5 Online Screener for use in your practice, today!

You and your office staff qualify for FREE ACCESS to the NEW DSM-5 Online Screener which makes ADHD screening a quick and easy process for your patients - in the office.

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