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Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) is a self-reported questionnaire for screening and severity measuring of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).[1] GAD-7 has seven items, which measure severity of various signs of GAD according to reported response categories with assigned points (see below). Assessment is indicated by the total score, which made up by adding together the scores for the scale all seven items.[2]GAD-7 is a sensitive self-administrated test to assess generalized anxiety disorder.[3] normally used in outpatient and primary care settings for referral to psychiatrist pending outcome.[4] However, it cannot be used as replacement for clinical assessment and additional evaluation should be used to confirm a diagnosis of GAD.The scale uses a normative system of scoring with question at the end qualitatively describing severity of the patient's anxiety over the past 2 weeks.[4]GAD-7 scoringThe GAD-7 score is calculated by assigning scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, to the response categories of 'not at all', 'several days', 'more than half the days', and 'nearly every day', respectively, and adding together the scores for the seven questions.Scores of 5, 10, and 15 are taken as the cut-off points for mild, moderate and severe anxiety, respectively. When used as a screening tool, further evaluation is recommended when the score is 10 or greater.GAD-7 Anxiety SeverityScores represent: 0-5 mild. 6-10 moderate. 11-15 moderately severe anxiety. 15-21 severe anxiety. What is PHQ-9The PHQ-9 (DEP-9 in some sources[5]) is a 9-question instrument given to patients in a primary care setting to screen for the presence and severity of depression. It is the 9-question depression scale from the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ). The results of the PHQ-9 may be used to make a depression diagnosis according to DSM-IV criteria and takes less than 3 minutes to complete. The total of all 9 responses from the PHQ-9 aims to predict the presence and severity of depression. Primary care providers frequently use the PHQ-9 to screen for depression in patients.PHQ-9 scoringIt is not a screening tool for depression, but it is used to monitor the severity of depression and response to treatment. However, it can be used to make a tentative diagnosis of depression in at-risk populations - eg, those with coronary heart disease or after stroke.PHQ-9 Depression SeverityScores represent: 0-5 mild. 6-10 moderate. 11-15 moderately severe anxiety. 15-21 moderately severe. 15-21 severe depression. Mental health assessments can help you keep track of your psychological well-being and identify potential concerns that may require professional attention. These popular assessments promote self-awareness, helping individuals track their mental health over time. In this post, we'll explore three common assessments: the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) scale, the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales 21 (DASS-21), with a particular focus on DASS-21, which we employ in our program.The GAD-7 for AnxietyThe GAD-7 is a brief measure primarily used to screen for generalized anxiety disorder. It consists of seven questions that assess the severity of various signs of anxiety over the past two weeks. Health professionals often use it to monitor symptom severity and response to treatment. It is a straightforward tool that can help individuals recognize possible anxiety-related symptoms in a non-clinical setting.The PHQ-9 for DepressionThe PHQ-9 functions similarly to the GAD-7 but focuses on depression. This questionnaire includes nine items, which align with the diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder. The PHQ-9 is widely utilized in both clinical and research settings to assess the presence and severity of depressive symptoms. Like the GAD-7, it can also provide insight into the efficacy of treatment over time.Our Pick: the DASS-21At TheraHive, we use the DASS-21, a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. Each of these three scales contains seven items, making it a comprehensive tool for evaluating a broad spectrum of emotions. The DASS-21 helps us understand the impact of our courses on participants' mental health and raises awareness about various emotional states. It's a crucial component of our educational toolkit, enabling participants to reflect on their emotional well-being effectively.Using Assessments ResponsiblyWhile these tools are beneficial, it's essential to approach them with an understanding of their limitations. These assessments are not diagnostic tools nor a substitute for professional healthcare advice. They are best used as a preliminary step in identifying potential issues that may warrant further professional evaluation. In educational settings like ours, assessments help us gauge the impact of our mental health courses on learning and awareness.For those tracking changes in their mental health over time, incorporating assessments like the DASS-21 alongside diary cards can provide a nuanced view of how responses evolve, which can be particularly valuable in therapeutic or educational contexts.How Often Should You Use These AssessmentsTaking these assessments over time can help you monitor your progress as you work to improve your mental health. For example, a cadence we often recommend to TheraHive students is to use these assessments to check in on their progress every three months. It's natural for results to fluctuate amidst the ups and downs of life, so don't get disheartened if you don't always see improvement.Mental health assessments like the GAD-7, PHQ-9, and DASS-21 are powerful tools that can enhance our understanding of mental health and provide insights into our emotional wellbeing. However, they should be used judiciously and within the context of professional guidance. Whether used in educational settings or personal monitoring, these tools can support a broader strategy aimed at fostering greater mental health awareness and facilitating early intervention strategies. {{ promo-banner-1 }}Roland SmartCo-Founder & CEO at TheraHiveRoland is a marketer, author, designer, and builder with extensive startup and enterprise experience. He led the marketing organization at five startups (three were acquired). He served as CMO of Product School, an online education firm, and he's also served as an advisor to Guidepost DBT.