



4

Mental Status

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 4 in the textbook and completing this section of the workbook, students should be able to:

1. Identify aspects of an interview that facilitate mental status examination.
2. Describe techniques to assess mental status in the following areas: physical appearance, cognitive abilities, emotional stability, speech, and language skills.
3. Recognize findings that deviate from expected findings.
4. Compare and contrast common conditions affecting mental status.
5. Identify conditions affecting mental status in various age groups.

TEXTBOOK REVIEW

Chapter 4 Mental Status (pages 82–101)

CONTENT REVIEW QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer for each of the following questions.

1. A patient's inability to follow simple instructions could indicate which of the following findings?
 - a. dysphonia
 - b. amnesia
 - c. aphasia
 - d. depression
2. While examining a 14-month-old baby, the examiner observes drooling from the mouth. This finding is:
 - a. considered normal.
 - b. consistent with mental retardation.
 - c. a possible indication of hyperactivity.
 - d. commonly associated with cocaine withdrawal.

3. A patient scores a 22 out of 40 on a "Set Test" to evaluate mental function as a whole. What does this score indicate?
 - a. possible depression
 - b. possible dementia
 - c. need for further evaluation
 - d. normal functioning
4. The examiner asks the patient to complete this statement: "A bird is to air as a fish is to _____." This is an example of what type of testing?
 - a. calculation
 - b. analogy
 - c. judgment
 - d. mood and feelings
5. The patient's response to the examiner in question 4 is "scales." What does this response likely reflect?
 - a. left cerebral hemisphere lesion
 - b. depression
 - c. eating disorder
 - d. aphasia
6. What technique should be used to evaluate the mental status of a patient with head trauma?
 - a. Mini-Mental State
 - b. perceptual distortion assessment
 - c. Glasgow Coma Scale
 - d. functional assessment
7. A patient is nonresponsive and demonstrates a rigid extension of arms, legs, and feet. What does this describe?
 - a. decorticate posture
 - b. decerebrate posture
 - c. hemiplegia
 - d. Korsakoff's syndrome
8. Which of the following indicates possible cognitive impairment?
 - a. ability to complete personal care without assistance
 - b. suspiciousness or inappropriate affect
 - c. articulate communication
 - d. prudent behavior and calm demeanor
9. A 65-year-old female is brought to the clinic by her family, who report that they have noticed a change in her mental abilities over the past 2 weeks. Normally she is independent, intelligent, and very socially oriented. Her medical history is unremarkable except for congestive heart failure, for which she takes digoxin. She has had no major changes in her health. What question would be the most important for the examiner to ask the family?
 - a. "Is there a family history of Alzheimer's?"
 - b. "How much alcohol does she drink in an average week?"
 - c. "When was her digoxin blood level last checked?"
 - d. "Did you know that mental function begins to decline after the age of 60?"
10. A patient who has difficulty writing or drawing is most likely to have which condition?
 - a. cerebral dysfunction
 - b. peripheral neuropathy
 - c. organic brain syndrome
 - d. psychiatric hallucinations

11. Mrs. Sanders had a cerebrovascular accident 2 days ago. She moves when her name is called. She moans when she experiences painful stimuli. Which of the following best describes Mrs. Sanders' level of consciousness?
 - a. confusion
 - b. delirium
 - c. lethargy
 - d. stupor

12. A mother brings her 18-month-old boy to the clinic. She states that the child rarely talks or smiles. She has also noticed he does not like to be held. She states his motor development seems to be normal. These symptoms consistent with what condition?
 - a. dementia
 - b. autistic disorder
 - c. attention deficit
 - d. delirium

13. A patient with Alzheimer's will classically display which of the following?
 - a. alternating level of orientation—good during the day, but poor at night
 - b. hallucinations and decorticate posturing
 - c. disintegration of personality
 - d. rapid onset of symptoms

Terminology Review

Matching

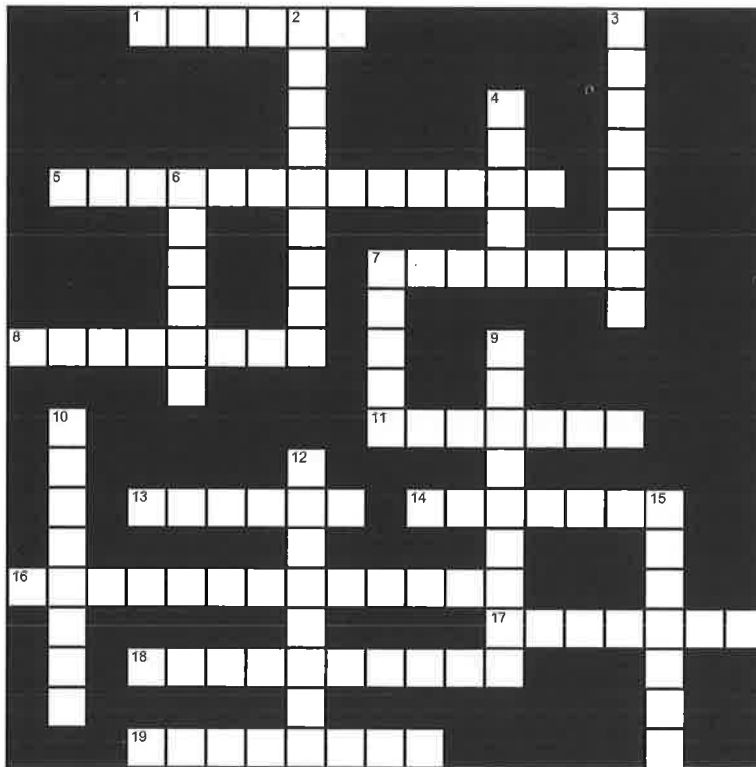
Match the infant behavior to the age at which you would expect to see it. You will not use every age range.

Infant Behavior	Age
14. _____ Babbling, cooing	a. 2 to 3 months
15. _____ Saying, "mama, dada"	b. 3 to 4 months
16. _____ Social smiling	c. 4 to 6 months
	d. 6 to 8 months
	e. 9 to 10 months

Match the information gained to the corresponding area of mental assessment. Answers may be used more than once.

Finding of Examination	Area of Assessment
17. _____ Signs of anxiety	a. Cognitive abilities
18. _____ Body language	b. Speech/language
19. _____ Attention span	c. Emotional stability
20. _____ Inability to recall and use words	d. Appearance and behavior
21. _____ Inability to speak in a normal pitch	
22. _____ Alterations in affect	
23. _____ Arithmetic skills	

Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1. Emotional feeling tone
- 5. Sensory experience not due to external stimulus
- 7. Inability to complete a task, other than because of paralysis or lack of comprehension
- 8. Area of temporal lobe that permits comprehension of spoken and written language
- 11. Coma scale used to assess function of cerebral cortex and brainstem, and to quantify consciousness
- 13. Part of the cerebrum responsible for perception and behavior
- 14. Disturbance in ability to express thoughts verbally
- 16. Demonstrated by patient's ability to follow simple instructions
- 17. Events in the brain such as trauma, infection, or chemical imbalance
- 18. Speech defect associated with motor deficit of lips, tongue, palate, or pharynx
- 19. Ability to reason

Down

- 2. Impairment of this type is characterized by loss of memory, confusion, inappropriate affect
- 3. Lobe of the brain primarily responsible for processing sensory data as it is received
- 4. Area associated with speech formation
- 6. System that mediates patterns of behavior such as mating, survival, aggression, fear, and affection
- 7. Associated with decline in synthesis and metabolism of neurotransmitters
- 9. Disorder of voice volume, quality, or pitch
- 10. Lobe of brain responsible for perception and interpretation of sounds
- 12. Lobe of brain primarily responsible for mental status
- 15. Figure of speech where objects or concepts are compared to each other

CONCEPTS APPLICATION

List ways that the following aspects of cognitive abilities might be assessed during examination and how to evaluate the responses.

1. Attention
2. Memory
3. Judgment
4. Insight
5. Abstract reasoning
6. Thought processes and content

CASE STUDY

Mrs. Mildred Cobb is a 78-year-old female who is brought to the geriatric clinic by her son and daughter-in-law. Mrs. Cobb's son tells the examiner that his father passed away 5 months ago, and ever since then his mother has "gone downhill." Mr. Cobb indicates that his mother is no longer keeping her house clean or cooking appropriate meals. Also, her personal hygiene habits have changed dramatically. She has lost interest in getting her hair done, and she no longer likes to get dressed for the day. Mr. Cobb tells the examiner, "When I suggest a retirement home, she becomes very angry and tells me to mind my own business. I am just worried about Mom, and I want to make sure she is well cared for." During this conversation, Mrs. Cobb sits quietly. She interjects only to say, "I have taken care of you, your brother, and your father. Now, all of a sudden, you think I am helpless and want to lock me away." Mrs. Cobb appears clean, although her hair is matted and her clothes are badly wrinkled and do not match. Her speech is clear, but her overall affect is very dull. She does not make eye contact with her son or the examiner. A physical examination demonstrates normal bodily functioning consistent with her age group.

1. Which data deviate from normal findings, suggesting altered mental health?
2. What additional questions could the examiner ask to clarify symptoms?
3. What additional physical examination, if any, should the examiner complete?
4. With which conditions affecting mental health are her symptoms consistent?

CRITICAL THINKING

1. What are the types of dementia, and how can they be differentiated?
2. What types of changes in mental functioning can be expected in an older adult? Address personality, intellectual function, problem-solving skills, and memory.