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Abstract

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**ASSESSING DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT:
RELIABILITY OF THE 5-ITEM GERIATRIC DEPRESSION SCALE.**

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It has been identified that 30% of older adults in hospital emergency departments have depression in addition to their presenting medical problem. This is not surprising as depression is the most common mental health disorder in older adults. Emergency department (ED) assessment of older people does not, however, include routine screening for depression. This is despite evidence linking depression to functional decline, increased ED use, morbidity and mortality. Routine screening for depression in older people who present to emergency departments is well supported, however, must be completed with a psychometrically sound assessment. One standardised approach used to screen the mental health of older people is the 5-item Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-5). To date this has not been examined for use with older people who present to the ED.

Study aim: The internal reliability of the GDS-5 with older adults who presented to the ED was examined.

Methods: The GDS-5 was administered to patients who had attended the ED in the prior week and were discharged directly home. The GDS-5 was administered by phone. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha and item-to-total correlations.

Results: The GDS-5 was administered to 103 patients. Average age was 79 ± 9.1 years (69 females, 34 males). Fifty percent of patients screened positively for depression. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.5.

Conclusion: The GDS-5 has been verified as a suitable screening tool to detect depression in older adults in a range of clinical settings. This study found 50% of older adults screened positively for depression. Internal reliability was low, consistent with previous research completed with inpatient and outpatient older adults. This presentation discusses psychometric findings in relation to selecting the best option for assessing the mental health needs of older adults presenting to the ED.