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The use of PRIME-MD questionnaire in a rheumatology clinic.

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Author: A S Russell
B K Hui

Author Affiliation: 562 Heritage Medical Research Centre, University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2S2.
asr@ualberta.ca

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Abstract: To determine whether the Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders 1-page Brief Patient Health Questionnaire (PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ) can serve as: (1) a diagnostic test for fibromyalgia syndrome (FM), or (2) a questionnaire through which internists can be alerted to otherwise hidden mental disorders in patients attending internal medicine clinics.

Two hundred and thirteen consecutive patients attending a rheumatology clinic were given the PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ and seen by a rheumatologist who was blind to the PRIME-MD diagnosis.

The PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ pointed to Major Depressive Disorder in 33.3% of FM patients, Other Depressive Disorder in 33.3% of FM patients, and Panic Disorder in 22.2% of FM patients (all of whom also had Major Depressive Disorder), as compared to 13.1, 13.1, and 3.0% respectively in patients with other rheumatic disorders. However, when used as a diagnostic test for FM, the PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ did not have adequate diagnostic value. When all the PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ diagnoses were compiled, however, a trend was observed. Compared to the rates of mental disorders in both the normal population and in primary care practices, the rates found in this rheumatology clinic were higher.

The PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ is not an adequate diagnostic test for FM. Because FM is primarily a somatization disorder that draws its symptoms from other current diseases, it may in fact be impossible to diagnose FM based on specific symptoms alone. However, the PRIME-MD 1-page PHQ proved to be a useful diagnostic tool in a rheumatology clinic. It helped to alert the physician to the possibility of an elevated frequency of mental disorders that would otherwise have gone unnoticed and untreated.

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