Assessment of Functional Impairment in Children: A Critical Target for Evaluation

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TEDx
Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.
The Power Of Resilience

Relevant Disclosure

• I have developed tests marketed by Multi-Health Systems, Pro-Ed and Western Psychological Services including the Rating Scales of Impairment (MHS).
• I am Editor in Chief of the Journal of Attention Disorders (Sage) and Co-Editor of the Encyclopedia of Child Development (Springer).

Today’s Learning Objectives

- Why evaluate impairment?
- Overview of the conceptual basis of impairment
- Define impairment
- What is the relationship between impairment and symptoms/diagnoses
- Review the data
- Discuss the clinical implications
We Are the First Congress on Defining Mental Illness (circa 1820)

How Do We Understand, Define and Categorize Mental Illness?

How Shall We Understand, Define, Categorize and Evaluate Treatment Response in Mental Illness?

• By etiology or cause?
• By emotions, behaviors and thoughts?
• By impaired function in activities of life?
What is the Goal of a Comprehensive Evaluation?

- Define symptoms?
- Meet eligibility criteria?
- Identify strengths and weaknesses?
- Set baselines?

Why is the assessment of impairment critical to a comprehensive evaluation?

Why is direct observation so critical for child assessment?

The relationship between symptoms and functioning remains unexpectedly weak and often bidirectional.
Clinicians are faced with emerging needs to:
- demonstrate the impact psychological and psychiatric diagnoses have on children and adults
- Measure impairment when using the DSM-5 or the ICD
- Navigate the increasing requirement to measure impairment effectively

There is an increasing need to demonstrate functional impairment as part of a diagnostic process for medical, mental health, and even educational conditions

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION
Problems Of Defining Impairment

No consistent agreement on a definition of impairment

Researchers are advocating to expand the understanding of impairment in the diagnostic process but progress in clinical practice is slow

As interest in impairment rises, so too do the number of resources available

How can we sort through all the research?

What Do The Associations Say?

The DSM-5 heavily emphasizes the role of impairment over and above symptom presentation

The term “functional impairment” is a concept that easily equates with disability in the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
What Does The Research Say?

• Patients who do not meet specific symptom criteria may be just as impaired and disrupted as the lives of individuals who meet various criteria.
• Many who may meet symptom count for a specific diagnosis may not be significantly impaired.
• It’s not surprising that in both the DSM–IV-TR and DSM-5 a requirement of significant impairment is noted in more than 70% of the disorders listed as a criterion for diagnosis.

Impairment can be viewed as the outcome of a risk factor such as a psychological disorder interacting with other variables manifested by a constellation of measurable behaviors.

What Does It Mean To “Be Impaired”? 
Let’s Break It Down Further

- Variables within the family, community and broader culture may insulate or contribute to impairment.
- Some symptoms in an algorithm model are more potent than others in predicting impairment.
- At certain ages, gender may differentially affect the expression of some symptoms and the severity of functional impairment.
- Impairment is also very clearly not appreciated on a linear continuum.

Other Factors To Be Aware Of

- The relationship of a particular condition to levels of impairment is also not evenly distributed across a bell curve.
- Socioeconomic and minority status factors may impact the severity of impairment experienced.
- Certain conditions may cause more or less impairment in certain settings.

So what is impairment?
Impairment is the reduced ability to meet the demands of life because of a psychological, physical, or cognitive condition.

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How do we define...

How do we define...

Adaptive behavior?

Disorder?

Disability?

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Symptoms vs. Impairment

Inattention

Difficulty completing homework

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Two More Factors To Consider

Severity
- Degree
- Intensity
- Perception
- Frequency
- Suffering
- Duration

Situation
- Context
- Instance
- Set of demands
- Moment to moment experience
- Setting

How does impairment differ from adaptive behavior?

Adaptive Behavior vs. Impairment

Using utensils
Not using utensils to eat
Adaptive Behavior Measures vs. Impairment

Skill vs. Performance

Do you know HOW to do it?

Do you ACTUALLY do it?

What Is A Disorder?

- A political phenomenon
- A collection of symptoms
- A deviation from the norm
- A disease
- A group of symptoms that significantly impairs functioning
- A subjective condition
- A collection of objective signs

What Is A Disability?

- A perceived inability to perform daily functions
- Persistent
- Legislated
- Sociopolitical
- Mental, physical or emotional
- Cultural
IDEIA Defines Disability As...

A child with an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities.
Key Features Of The RSI

- Fast completion time
- Age-appropriate items
- Assess youth ages 5 to 18 years
- Large representative normative sample
- Assess impairment clearly regardless of the diagnosis

Key Features Of The RSI

- Available in Spanish
- Monitor progress across time
- Satisfies the impairment criteria of the DSM-5
- Multiple raters for a more accurate assessment
- Assist in forming intervention and treatment planning
- Aligned with WHO’s domains of functioning found in ICF
Uses For The RSI

Rating Scale of Impairment (RSI) Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Parent Form</th>
<th>Teacher Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-12 Years</td>
<td>41 items</td>
<td>29 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18 Years</td>
<td>49 items</td>
<td>29 items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score

RSI Scales
- School
- Social
- Mobility
- Domestic
- Family

Self-care

Relationship Between The RSI And Other Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSI Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Emotional Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills Strength Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Form (Teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MobiX &amp; Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MobiX (Teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MobiX (Student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MobiX (School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MobiX (Assessment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship Between The RSI And Other Impairment Measures

- RSI and the Barkley Functional Impairment Scale (BFIS–CA)
  - Child Sample corrected $r = .55$ to $.67$
  - Youth Sample corrected $r = .63$ to $.71$
- RSI and the Children’s Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)
  - Corrected $r = -.34$ to $.51$

Directions On The RSI

Conclusions

- Impairment can be defined and measured in children.
- Functional impairment can be accurately measured with an instrument like the Rating Scale of Impairment.
- The RSI offers the first valid, reliable comprehensive measure of daily functional challenges within a factor analyzed framework built on the WHODAS categories.
- Impairment is a unique phenomenon beyond symptoms, test scores and diagnoses.
- Assessment of and treatment monitoring of impairment offers an important advance in assessment.
Questions?

Please email me at: SamGoldstein.com

Thank You!

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