The Psychiatric Mental Status Exam (MSE)

Appearance and behavior

- Dress, grooming, hygiene
- Posture and gait
- Facial expression
- Eye contact (and relatedness to examiner)
- Motor activity
- Other mannerisms or behaviors
- Degree of cooperation with exam
- How the patient makes you feel
Speech

Rate

Quantity

Volume (loudness)

Fluency

Clarity (articulation)

Emotions

Mood: Pervasive and maintained emotional state, sometimes given in patient’s own words. Examples: sad, happy, angry, anxious.

Affect: Outward manifestation of mood. How the patient shows his feelings.

Predominant

Intensity

Lability

Appropriateness

Thought

Process or Form: Associations. How ideas fit together, including rate and flow.

Poverty of thought – few thoughts

Blocking – inability to form thoughts

Racing thoughts, flight of ideas – rapid thoughts

Loose associations – disconnected thoughts

Circumstantiality – lots of extra details but gets to point

Tangentiality – connections between thoughts may be apparent, but question is never answered

Content: what is being thought

Delusions – fixed, false beliefs

Ideas (or Delusions) of reference – belief that some often unimportant event is related specifically to the patient
Thought insertion or withdrawal – belief that thoughts are being taken out of or put into head

Thought broadcasting – belief that others can hear thoughts

Obsessions – distracting, persistent thoughts

Compulsions – irresistible urges to perform meaningless tasks

Phobias – irrational fears of specific things

**Perceptions:**

**Illusions:** Misinterpreted sensory inputs

**Hallucinations:** Perceiving input in absence of external sensory stimulation

- Visual
- Auditory
- Olfactory
- Gustatory
- Tactile (Haptic)

**Hypnagogic** – hallucinations as patient falls asleep or awakens

**Dissociative States**

- Depersonalization – feeling that one is not oneself
- Derealization – feeling that the world, people and things around are not real

**Sensorium and intellectual (cognitive) functions** (see attached table)

- Level of consciousness
- Orientation
- Concentration/Attention
- Memory
  - Immediate (new learning)
  - Recent
  - Remote
Use of Language

Comprehension

Repetition

Naming

Reading

Writing

Fund of knowledge

Abstractions

Insight

Judgment