

## Recognizing and Screening for Anhedonia

Anhedonia is increasingly recognized as a common symptom domain across multiple psychiatric conditions that can be associated with poorer outcomes, reduced quality of life, and higher rates of relapse.<sup>1</sup>

### Definition

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)* definition of anhedonia differs slightly according to the patient's primary diagnosis<sup>a,b</sup> but has been historically characterized as the diminished ability to desire and experience pleasure from activities that are typically enjoyable.<sup>1-3</sup>

### Prevalence and Presentation in Psychiatric Disorders

Anhedonia is a common symptom of several psychiatric disorders and is often seen in major depressive disorder (MDD), bipolar I disorder (BP-1), and schizophrenia.<sup>2-4</sup> Anhedonia presents differently across psychiatric disorders, and its clinical features vary between MDD and schizophrenia.<sup>5</sup>



in MDD<sup>4</sup>



in BP-1<sup>4</sup>



in schizophrenia<sup>5</sup>

Higher levels of anhedonia have been linked to higher suicidal ideation and evidence of an increase in risk for suicide attempts.<sup>3</sup>

## Clinical Screening

Clinical Tool	Use	Anhedonia Item(s)
PHQ-9	Screening and monitoring depression severity	Item 1
MADRS	Clinician-rated depression severity	Item 8
HAM-D	Assessment of depression	Item 7
SANS	Negative symptom assessment in schizophrenia	Anhedonia-Asociality (Subscale)

HAM-D = Hamilton Depression Rating Scale, MADRS = Montgomery-Åsberg Depression Rating Scale, PHQ-9 = Patient Health Questionnaire-9, SANS = Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms.<sup>6-9</sup>

Practical interview-based approaches can also reveal patients' new or ongoing reduced interest, motivation, and engagement in their life, such as the OARS<sup>10</sup>:

O

### OPEN QUESTIONS

Can help you understand the patient's point of view

A

### AFFIRMATIONS

Can boost patients' confidence about taking action

R

### REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Can help establish trust and invite patients to explore their own perceptions, values, and feelings

S

### SUMMARIES

Distill the essence of several statements and reflect them back to the patient

## Key Takeaways

Early recognition of anhedonia is essential because it is a common symptom across many psychiatric disorders and has been associated with poorer functioning, higher relapse risk, and reduced quality of life. Routine screening can help clinicians identify motivational and pleasure deficits that patients may not report, understand the breadth of anhedonia's impact, refine diagnostic accuracy, and help guide more individualized treatment planning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MDD and BP-1 definition: "Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Schizophrenia definition: "Decreased ability to experience pleasure from positive stimuli or a degradation in the recollection of pleasure previously experienced."<sup>2</sup>

## References

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