

UPDATE on USE of the MMSE

January 2007

VHA Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group and the Medical Advisory Panel

Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) has been working with an ad hoc work group of assessment experts to identify instruments for brief cognitive assessment that are used in evaluation and monitoring of dementia. The group will soon be releasing a document summarizing these instruments that may be of use to clinicians working with a population of patients suffering from dementia. PBM has evaluated these instruments with regard to their potential as replacement or alternative to the MMSE's role in the criteria for use for the cholinesterase inhibitors or memantine. Our determination is that the MMSE is the instrument best suited to meet PBM's needs with regard to determining the appropriateness of the use of cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine. Factors contributing to this determination include the fact that the MMSE was the instrument used in the clinical trials for these agents. We have been unable to find an alternative that easily translate a score to an equivalent MMSE score or classifies dementia in the categories of mild, moderate, or severe, as the MMSE does. As a result, PBM will continue to require the use of the MMSE in prescribing cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine

Discussions with the PBM's Medical Advisory Panel have yielded the following suggestions:

1. Clinicians and clinics who use the MMSE in their practice should legally obtain a copy of the MMSE that they can use as a reference. Having the document laminated will increase its longevity. Rather than including the test document in a patient's record, simply record the score, for example, 29/31, this way the one copy can be reused. While many clinicians have the MMSE memorized and administration of the instrument by memory has been deemed legally acceptable, such practice may lead to increased variability in administration of the instrument, and thus a decrease in overall validity.
2. Copies of the MMSE can be purchased from Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc, the owner of the copyright to the MMSE.
3. In the past, pharmaceutical representatives have distributed copies of the MMSE, they may be another resource. You must not make copies of MMSE forms obtained from a third party.
4. Several VISNS (but not all) have institutional subscriptions to UpToDate. Although we were initially advised that any staff member in a VISN with institutional memberships to UpToDate could print out as many copies as desired from UpToDate for clinical or research purposes, that communication has been rescinded.

Additional information in the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is available at <http://vaww.pbm.va.gov/faq%20sheets/MMSECopyrightFAQ.pdf> or <http://www.pbm.va.gov/faq%20sheets/MMSECopyrightFAQ.pdf>