



HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

Psychiatric Disorders in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

FACT SHEET

Psychiatric Disorders in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice.

Intended Outcomes

Individuals will learn the definition, how commonly psychiatric disorders occur, and typical signs of psychiatric disorders among individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD).

Definitions

Psychiatric disorder:

- a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual
- is associated with present distress (e.g., a painful symptom) or disability (i.e., impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom
- must not be merely an expectable and culturally sanctioned response to a particular event, for example, the death of a loved one
- a manifestation of a behavioral, psychological, or biological dysfunction in the individual

Facts

- Studies estimate that between 30-35% of individuals with IDD have co-occurring psychiatric disorders.
- Psychiatric disorders represented in individuals with IDD include mood disorders, psychotic disorder, impulse control disorders, anxiety disorders, disruptive behavioral disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and personality disorders.
- Because many individuals with IDD have limited speech, most referrals to psychiatrists are due to behaviors displayed by the individual.
- Common reasons for a referral to a psychiatrist are self-injury, aggressive behavior, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, or a negative change in behavior.
- The most common reason for a psychiatric referral for individuals with IDD is aggression.



HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

Psychiatric Disorders in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

FACT SHEET

- Disruptive behavioral disorders are the most common reason for using psychotropic medication, hospitalization, and referral to a residential facility for individuals with IDD.
- Individuals with IDD are twice as likely to suffer from a medical illness as the general population, so it is important to consider a medical illness if there is a change in behavior.
- A change in the environment can also increase anxiety, which can produce negative behaviors in individuals with IDD. If there is a change in behavior it is important to consider a change in environment as well.
- Signs of psychiatric disorders in individuals with IDD can include:
 - Self-injurious behavior
 - Aggression
 - Persistent crying or sadness
 - Change in sleep
 - Glaring or showing hostility towards strangers
 - Hyperactivity/inattention
 - Impulsiveness

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Take note of the individual's weight and vital signs (temperature, heart rate, rate of breathing) and note again routinely every month, so that you have information to compare to if there is a change in behavior.
2. Take note of how the individual usually sleeps over 24 hours so you have information to compare to if there is a change in behavior.
3. Develop methods to communicate with the individual.
4. If a change in behavior is noted, explore whether there could be any physical or environmental causes.
5. If referring to a physician or psychiatrist, bring all the individual's health history and behavioral notes to the appointment.



HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

Psychiatric Disorders in Individuals with Intellectual
and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

FACT SHEET

Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Reasons for a change in behavior include:
 - A. Psychiatric disorder
 - B. Change in environment
 - C. Medical illness
 - D. All of the above
2. Possible signs and symptoms of a psychiatric disorder are:
 - A. Muscle rigidity
 - B. Fever
 - C. Seizures
 - D. Aggression
3. Psychiatric disorders diagnosed in individuals with IDD include:
 - A. They are not diagnosed in this population
 - B. Mood disorders
 - C. Psychotic disorders
 - D. B and C
4. The most common reason for a psychiatric referral for individuals with IDD is:
 - A. Aggression
 - B. Hyperactivity
 - C. Inattention
 - D. Crying



HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

Psychiatric Disorders in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

FACT SHEET

References

Allen, D. & Davies, D. (2007). Challenging behavior and psychiatric disorder in intellectual disability. *Current opinion in psychiatry*, 20 (5), 450-455. Retrieved 07/31/2015 from http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/561703_3.

NADD: An association for persons with developmental disabilities and mental health needs. Information on Dual Diagnosis. Retrieved 07/31/2015 from <http://thenadd.org/resources/information-on-dual-diagnosis-2/>.

Stein, D. J., Phillips, K. A., Bolton, D., Fulford, K. W. ., Sadler, J. Z., & Kendler, K. S. (2010). What is a Mental/Psychiatric Disorder? From DSM-IV to DSM-V. *Psychological Medicine*, 40(11), 1759-1765. Retrieved 07/31/2015 from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3101504/>.

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. Health care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Behavioral and mental health issues. Retrieved 07/31/2015 from <http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/etoolkit/mental-and-behavioral-health/>.

Learning Assessment Answers

1. D
2. D
3. D
4. A