Drinking Problems Index (DPI)

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

The DPI is a 17-item measure designed to assess drinking problems among older adults. The need for a specialized instrument for older adults has been suggested by analyses of life areas in which older persons are less likely to be at risk for adverse consequences from drinking than are younger persons. For example, an item tapping “difficulties at work” related to drinking may be less appropriate for older persons who are more likely to be retired and thus at lower risk for work-related drinking problems. Similar concerns have been raised with respect to such areas as “problems with spouse” and “driving while intoxicated.” Thus, general population instruments may not be sufficiently sensitive when applied to older samples. To remedy this situation, some analysts have urged incorporating items that tap adverse consequences that are more likely to occur as a result of drinking among older adults. Suggested item content has included falls, isolation as a result of drinking, and neglecting appearance of self and/or living quarters. In addition, some research suggests that escapist drinking may be an indicator of problem drinking among older individuals. The DPI taps adverse consequences from drinking, excessive consumption, dependence symptoms, and escapist drinking. The scale is made up of newly developed items targeted at older adults, as well as the most relevant of Cahalan’s (1970) items, and several items that were adapted from the MAST (Selzer, 1971).

**TARGET POPULATION**

- Adults
- Adolescents

**Groups for which this instrument might be especially helpful?**

Adults age 55 and older; the validation sample was made up of adults ages 55 to 65

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

- Number of items: 17
- Number of subscales:
- Format(s): ✗ Pencil-and-paper self-administered
  - ✗ Interview
  - ✗ Observation
  - ✗ Computer self-administered
  - ✗ Other
- Time required for administration: 3 to 5 minutes
- Administered by: Self
- Training required for administration? ✗ yes  ✓ no

SCORING
Time required to score/interpret: Minimal
Scored by: Research assistant/technical nonprofessional
Computerized scoring or interpretation available? □ yes □ no
Norms available? □ yes □ no
Instrument normed on subgroups? □ yes □ no
Comments: Data available on 1,614 men and women ages 55 to 65

PSYCHOMETRICS
Have reliability studies been done? □ yes □ no
What measure(s) of reliability was used?
□ Test-retest
□ Split half
☒ Internal consistency
Have validity studies been done? □ yes □ no
What measures of validity have been derived?
□ Content
☒ Criterion (predictive, concurrent, “postdictive”)
☒ Construct

RESEARCH APPLICABILITY
The DPI does not offer the kind of comprehensive and quasi-diagnostic assessment that a specialized screening instrument for older adults would provide. Nevertheless, the evidence accumulated thus far suggests that it is a valid and reliable measure for assessing problem drinking in surveys of community-residing older adults. As such, the DPI may be able to isolate more precisely some of the factors associated with the onset and maintenance of late-life problem drinking.

SOURCE, COST AND COPYRIGHT ISSUES
Copyright: □ yes □ no
Cost: None
Source: The DPI can be obtained by writing:
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VA Palo Alto Health Care System
Menlo Park Division
795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
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SOURCE REFERENCE

SUPPORTING REFERENCES