Insomnia Severity Index (ISI)

About the ISI

What does it measure?

The Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) is a self-report instrument designed to measure the nature, severity, and impact of insomnia and to monitor response to treatment. The ISI is a seven-item measure that assesses the subjective quality of sleep, severity of symptoms, satisfaction with sleep patterns, degree insomnia interferes with daily functioning, degree insomnia is noticeable to others, and level of distress from sleep problems. Respondents indicate the degree of difficulty they experienced over the last two weeks to assess the severity of insomnia problems.

Availability

The ISI is a copyrighted survey. Use of the instrument requires permission from Charles M. Morin, Ph.D. at Université Laval. The ISI is included in the battery of measures available within the Behavior Health Data Portal (BHDP). The BHDP is a software platform used to measure and examine patient-level clinical outcomes in military behavioral health clinics.

Scoring the ISI

What is the scoring range?

Each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale from 0, indicating no concerns/least difficulty in sleep, to 4, indicating concerns/extreme difficulty in sleep. The overall range for the ISI is 0-28, with higher total scores indicating poorer sleep quality.

What are the clinical cutoffs, if any?

Scores of 8, 15, and 22 represent cut points for mild, moderate, and severe insomnia, respectively. Providers can use the ISI to assess a variety of sleep issues commonly reported by patients, including the severity of sleep onset and maintenance (middle and early morning awakening) difficulties, satisfaction with current sleep patterns, interference of sleep difficulties with daily functioning, appearance of impairment attributed to the sleep problem, and degree of concern caused by insomnia. A cutoff score of 14 can discern subjects with insomnia from normal controls.

How should a provider interpret results?

ISI Score	Insomnia Severity	Interpretation
0-7	None	No clinically significant insomnia
8-14	Mild	Subthreshold insomnia
15-21	Moderate	Clinical insomnia (moderate severity)
22-28	Severe	Clinical insomnia (severe)

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Using the ISI in Practice

How should providers use the results in treatment planning?

The ISI is an excellent screening measure that can help clinicians quickly assess for symptoms of insomnia. Clinicians should use the ISI as an objective measure of insomnia severity, with a score of 15 or above indicating that insomnia treatment may be warranted. The ISI can be used to establish insomnia severity as part of a comprehensive sleep assessment and guide a provider's choice of the type and intensity of therapeutic intervention. Since the measure is short and easy to fill out, the ISI can also be useful as a means of evaluating treatment response and progress over time. In addition, the ISI can be useful in the research realm, as it provides a reliable and valid measure to supplement specific sleep parameters (e.g., sleep patterns, quality of sleep).

References

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