Module 3: Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**3.1. Clinical Assessment of Abnormal Behavior**

* Define clinical assessment.
* Clarify why clinical assessment is an ongoing process.
* Define and exemplify reliability.
* Define and exemplify validity.
* Define standardization.
* List and describe seven methods of assessment.

**3.2. Diagnosing and Classifying Abnormal Behavior**

* Explain what it means to make a clinical diagnosis.
* Define syndrome.
* Clarify and exemplify what a classification system does.
* Identify the two most used classification systems.
* Outline the history of the DSM.
* Identify and explain the elements of a diagnosis.
* Outline the major disorder categories of the DSM-5-TR.
* Describe the ICD-11.
* Clarify why the DSM-5-TR and ICD-11 need to be harmonized.

**3.3. Treatment of Mental Disorders – An Overview**

* Clarify reasons why an individual may need to seek treatment.
* Critique myths about psychotherapy.

KEY TERMS

**Antecedents**: Environmental events or stimuli that trigger a behavior. They are crucial in understanding what initiates specific behaviors in behavioral assessments.

**Anxiety Disorders**: Mental health conditions characterized by excessive fear or anxiety, impacting daily functioning and quality of life.

**Behavioral Assessment**: The measurement and analysis of a target behavior for the purpose of understanding and potentially modifying it. It focuses on the antecedents, behaviors, and consequences of a behavior.

**Behavior**: The actions or reactions of a person, usually in relation to the environment. This includes what a person does, says, thinks, or feels.

**Bipolar and Related Disorders**: A group of mood disorders that typically involve significant fluctuations in mood, energy, and activity levels, often including periods of mania or hypomania and depression.

**Clinical Assessment**: The collection and evaluation of information about a client's psychological, biological, and social functioning to identify and understand their mental health condition. This process often involves observation, psychological tests, neurological tests, and interviews.

**Clinical Diagnosis**: The process of using assessment data to determine if the pattern of symptoms a person presents with is consistent with the diagnostic criteria for a specific mental disorder. It is a key step before starting any treatment.

**Clinical Interview**: A face-to-face meeting between a mental health professional and a patient, aimed at gathering data about the patient's behavior, attitudes, current situation, personality, and life history. It may be structured, unstructured, or semi-structured.

**Classification Systems**: Systems used for categorizing mental disorders, providing a high-level organization for understanding and diagnosing these conditions. The DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and ICD (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems) are examples of such systems.

**Clinical Diagnosis**: The process of diagnosing a mental disorder by using assessment data to determine if a person's symptoms align with the criteria for a specific disorder in established classification systems like the DSM or ICD.

**Computed Tomography (CT)**: A medical imaging procedure that involves taking X-rays of the brain at different angles. It is used to diagnose brain damage caused by head injuries or brain tumors.

**Consequences**: In behavioral assessment, consequences are the outcomes of a behavior that either encourage its future occurrence or discourage it. They play a critical role in determining how behaviors are shaped and maintained.

**Cross-Sectional Validity**: Refers to the consistency of a behavior across different situations. It's a consideration in observational methods, where a behavior observed in one situation might not occur in others.

**Descriptive Features**: These are characteristics or attributes that can be added to a clinical diagnosis to provide a more detailed picture of a patient's condition. They include the severity of the condition, its course, and specific manifestations.

**Descriptive Validity**: This refers to the accuracy with which a test measures what it claims to measure. It's established when scores on a new test are highly comparable to scores on an established test measuring the same construct.

**Diagnostic Criteria and Descriptors**: These are guidelines used by mental health professionals to make a diagnosis. They involve assessing if a patient's symptoms match specific criteria and may include severity, course specifiers, and other descriptors to refine the diagnosis.

**Dissociative Disorders**: These are characterized by disruptions or discontinuities in aspects of consciousness, including memory, identity, emotion, perception, body representation, motor control, and behavior. Examples include dissociative identity disorder, dissociative amnesia, and depersonalization/derealization disorder.

**DSM-V-TR**: Refers to the DSM-5 Text Revision, a version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association. It is a widely used tool for diagnosing and classifying mental disorders.

**Elimination Disorders**: These disorders are characterized by inappropriate elimination of urine or feces and are usually first diagnosed in childhood or adolescence. Examples include enuresis and encopresis.

**Feeding and Eating Disorders**: These are characterized by a persistent disturbance of eating or eating-related behavior, which can include behaviors like bingeing and purging. They cover disorders such as pica, rumination disorder, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating disorder.

**Gender Dysphoria**: Characterized by distress associated with the incongruity between one’s experienced or expressed gender and the gender assigned at birth.

**ICD-11**: The 11th revision of the *International Classification of Diseases*, which went into effect in 2022. It serves a broad range of uses globally and provides critical knowledge on the extent, causes, and consequences of human disease and death worldwide.

**Intelligence Tests**: These tests determine a patient’s level of cognitive functioning through a series of tasks that require both verbal and nonverbal skills. An example is the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test.

**Interrater Reliability**: The consistency of assessments between different raters. It ensures that different mental health professionals agree on a patient's diagnosis.

**Lab Observation**: Observing an organism in a controlled or artificial setting, using sophisticated equipment and methods like videotaping or one-way mirrors. This method is subject to reactivity, where observed behavior may change due to the observation process itself.

**Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)**: A technique that provides 3D images of the brain or other body structures using magnetic fields and computers. It is used to detect brain and spinal cord tumors, and nervous system disorders like multiple sclerosis.

**Naturalistic Observation**: Observing a person or animal in their natural environment. This approach aims to study behaviors in real-world settings but can be limited by reactivity and cross-sectional validity.

**Neurocognitive Disorders**: Characterized by a decline in cognitive functioning over time, with the disorder not having been present since birth or early in life. Examples include delirium, major and mild neurocognitive disorder, and Alzheimer’s disease.

**Neurodevelopmental Disorders**: A group of conditions that arise in the developmental period and include intellectual disability, communication disorders, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disorder, motor disorders, and ADHD.

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** Characterized by the presence of persistent, intrusive, and distressing thoughts, images, or urges called obsessions, which lead individuals to engage in repetitive behaviors or mental acts known as compulsions.

**Paraphilic Disorders**: A group of mental disorders characterized by atypical sexual preferences, fantasies, or behaviors that cause significant distress or impairment in functioning.

**Personality Disorders**: A class of mental disorders characterized by enduring patterns of behavior, cognition, and inner experience that deviate from cultural expectations and cause significant impairment in social and occupational functioning.

**Positron Emission Tomography (PET)**: A neuroimaging technique that uses radioactive tracers to visualize and measure brain activity and metabolic processes, aiding in the study of brain function and dysfunction.

**Predictive Validity**: The ability of a psychological test or assessment to accurately predict future behaviors, outcomes, or criteria that are relevant to the construct being measured.

**Principal Diagnosis**: In the context of psychiatric assessment, the primary mental health disorder identified as the main reason for seeking treatment, often used for insurance and billing purposes.

**Projective Tests**: Psychological assessments that require individuals to respond to ambiguous stimuli, such as images or words, which can reveal unconscious thoughts, feelings, and personality traits.

**Psychotherapy**: A therapeutic approach that involves a trained mental health professional providing psychological interventions to help individuals address emotional, behavioral, or mental health issues.

**Psychological Tests**: Standardized assessments used to measure various aspects of an individual's cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, providing valuable information for diagnosis and treatment planning.

**Reactivity**: The phenomenon where individuals may alter their behavior or responses when they are aware of being observed or assessed, potentially affecting the accuracy of measurement in psychological research.

**Reliability**: The consistency and stability of a measurement or assessment tool, indicating its ability to produce consistent results over time and across different situations, which is essential for valid interpretation.

**Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders**: A group of severe mental disorders characterized by disturbances in thought, emotion, and behavior, including conditions like schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and schizophreniform disorder.

**Self-Monitoring**: The process of observing and recording one's thoughts, emotions, or behaviors to gain insight into personal patterns and to facilitate behavior change or self-improvement.

**Semi-Structured Interview**: An interview method in psychological assessment that combines open-ended questions with predetermined questions, allowing for flexibility while maintaining some structure for consistency.

**Sexual Dysfunctions Disorders**: A category of mental disorders characterized by persistent difficulties or problems related to sexual desire, arousal, or performance, causing distress or impairment.

**Sleep-Wake Disorders**: A group of mental disorders that involve disruptions in sleep patterns, including conditions like insomnia, narcolepsy, and sleep apnea.

**Standardization**: The process of developing and administering psychological assessments or tests in a consistent and uniform manner to ensure accurate and meaningful results.

**Structured Interview**: An interview method in psychological assessment consisting of a predetermined set of questions asked in a specific order, allowing for a standardized and systematic evaluation.

**Subtypes**: Subcategories or classifications within a broader category or disorder that help differentiate

**Syndromes**: Symptoms that cluster together regularly. If they also follow the same, predictable course, we say that they are characteristic of a specific disorder.

**Target Behavior**: In behavioral psychology and therapy, the specific behavior or set of behaviors that a person or intervention is designed to address or change.

**Test-Retest Reliability**: A measure of the consistency of a psychological assessment or test over time, involving the administration of the same test to the same individuals on two separate occasions to assess the stability of the results.

**Thematic Apperception Test**: A projective psychological test that involves showing individuals ambiguous pictures and asking them to create a story about what is happening in the pictures, used to explore their unconscious thoughts and emotions.

**Unstructured Interview**: An interview method in psychological assessment that lacks a predetermined set of questions or a specific order, allowing for flexibility in the conversation and exploration of various topics.

**Validity**: The degree to which a psychological assessment or test measures what it intends to measure, indicating its accuracy and appropriateness for its intended purpose. Validity can encompass various aspects, including content validity, construct validity, and criterion validity.