Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)

***Reference:* Hamilton M. A rating scale for depression. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1960; 23:56–62**

Rating Clinician-rated

Administration time 20–30 minutes

Main purpose To assess severity of, and change in, depressive symptoms

Population Adults

Commentary

The HDRS (also known as the Ham-D) is the most widely used clinician-administered depression assessment scale. The original version contains 17 items ($HDRS_{17}$) pertaining to symptoms of depression experienced over the past week. Although the scale was designed for completion after an unstructured clinical interview, there are now semi-structured interview guides available. The HDRS was originally developed for hospital inpatients, thus the emphasis on melancholic and physical symptoms of depression. A later 21-item version ($HDRS_{21}$) included 4 items intended to subtype the depression, but which are sometimes, incorrectly, used to rate severity. A limitation of the HDRS is that atypical symptoms of depression (e.g., hypersomnia, hyperphagia) are not assessed (see SIGH-SAD, page 55).

Scoring

Method for scoring varies by version. For the $HDRS_{17}$, a score of 0–7 is generally accepted to be within the normal range (or in clinical remission), while a score of 20 or higher (indicating at least moderate severity) is usually required for entry into a clinical trial.

Versions

The scale has been translated into a number of languages including French, German, Italian, Thai, and Turkish. As well, there is an Interactive Voice Response version (IVR), a Seasonal Affective Disorder version (SIGH-SAD, see page 55), and a Structured Interview Version (HDS-SIV). Numerous versions with varying lengths include the HDRS17, HDRS21, HDRS29, HDRS8, HDRS6, HDRS24, and HDRS7 (see page 30).

Additional references

Hamilton M. Development of a rating scale for primary depressive illness. Br J Soc Clin Psychol 1967; 6(4):278–96.

Williams JB. A structured interview guide for the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale. Arch Gen Psychiatry 1988; 45(8):742–7.

Address for correspondence

The HDRS is in the public domain.

Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS)

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SCALE BASED ON A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Instructions: for each item select the one "cue" which best characterizes the patient. Be sure to record the answers in the appropriate spaces (positions 0 through 4).

1 DEPRESSED MOOD *(sadness, hopeless, helpless, worthless)*

0 |__| Absent.
1 |__| These feeling states indicated only on questioning.
2 |__| These feeling states spontaneously reported verbally.
3 |X| Communicates feeling states non-verbally, i.e. through facial expression, posture, voice and tendency to weep.
4 |__| Patient reports virtually only these feeling states in his/her spontaneous verbal and non-verbal communication.

2 FEELINGS OF GUILT

0 |__| Absent.
1 |X| Self reproach, feels he/she has let people down.
2 |__| Ideas of guilt or rumination over past errors or sinful deeds.
3 |__| Present illness is a punishment. Delusions of guilt.
4 |__| Hears accusatory or denunciatory voices and/or experiences threatening visual hallucinations.

3 SUICIDE

0 |X| Absent.
1 |__| Feels life is not worth living.
2 |__| Wishes he/she were dead or any thoughts of possible death to self.
3 |__| Ideas or gestures of suicide.
4 |__| Attempts at suicide (any serious attempt rate 4).

4 INSOMNIA: EARLY IN THE NIGHT

0 |__| No difficulty falling asleep.
1 |__| Complains of occasional difficulty falling asleep, i.e. more than ½ hour.
2 |X| Complains of nightly difficulty falling asleep.

5 INSOMNIA: MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

0 |__| No difficulty.
1 |X| Patient complains of being restless and disturbed during the night.
2 |__| Waking during the night – any getting out of bed rates 2 (except for purposes of voiding).

6 INSOMNIA: EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING

0 |__| No difficulty.
1 |__| Waking in early hours of the morning but goes back to sleep.
2 |X| Unable to fall asleep again if he/she gets out of bed.

7 WORK AND ACTIVITIES

0 |__| No difficulty.
1 |X| Thoughts and feelings of incapacity, fatigue or weakness related to activities, work or hobbies.
2 |__| Loss of interest in activity, hobbies or work – either directly reported by the patient or indirect in listlessness, indecision and vacillation (feels he/she has to push self to work or activities).
3 |__| Decrease in actual time spent in activities or decrease in productivity. Rate 3 if the patient does not spend at least three hours a day in activities (job or hobbies) excluding routine chores.
4 |__| Stopped working because of present illness. Rate 4 if patient engages in no activities except routine chores, or if patient fails to perform routine chores unassisted.

8 RETARDATION (slowness of thought and speech, impaired ability to concentrate, decreased motor activity)

0 |X| Normal speech and thought.
1 |__| Slight retardation during the interview.
2 |__| Obvious retardation during the interview.
3 |__| Interview difficult.
4 |__| Complete stupor.

9 AGITATION

0 |X| None.
1 |__| Fidgetiness.
2 |__| Playing with hands, hair, etc.
3 |__| Moving about, can't sit still.
4 |__| Hand wringing, nail biting, hair-pulling, biting of lips.

10 ANXIETY PSYCHIC

0 |X| No difficulty.
1 |__| Subjective tension and irritability.
2 |__| Worrying about minor matters.
3 |__| Apprehensive attitude apparent in face or speech.
4 |__| Fears expressed without questioning.

11 ANXIETY SOMATIC (physiological concomitants of anxiety) such as:

gastro-intestinal – dry mouth, wind, indigestion, diarrhea, cramps, belching
cardio-vascular – palpitations, headaches
respiratory – hyperventilation, sighing
urinary frequency
sweating

0 |__| Absent.
1 |X| Mild.
2 |__| Moderate.
3 |__| Severe.
4 |__| Incapacitating.

12 SOMATIC SYMPTOMS GASTRO-INTESTINAL

0 |X| None.
1 |__| Loss of appetite but eating without staff encouragement. Heavy feelings in abdomen.
2 |__| Difficulty eating without staff urging. Requests or requires laxatives or medication for bowels or medication for gastro-intestinal symptoms.

13 GENERAL SOMATIC SYMPTOMS

0 |X| None.
1 |__| Heaviness in limbs, back or head. Backaches, headaches, muscle aches. Loss of energy and fatigability.
2 |__| Any clear-cut symptom rates 2.

14 GENITAL SYMPTOMS (symptoms such as loss of libido, menstrual disturbances)

0 |X| Absent.
1 |__| Mild.
2 |__| Severe.

15 HYPOCHONDRIASIS

0 |X| Not present.
1 |__| Self-absorption (bodily).
2 |__| Preoccupation with health.
3 |__| Frequent complaints, requests for help, etc.
4 |__| Hypochondriacal delusions.

16 LOSS OF WEIGHT ***(RATE EITHER a OR b)***

a) According to the patient:	**b) According to weekly measurements:**
0 |X| No weight loss.	0 |__| Less than 1 lb weight loss in week.
1 |__| Probable weight loss associated with present illness.	1 |__| Greater than 1 lb weight loss in week.
2 |__| Definite (according to patient) weight loss.	2 |__| Greater than 2 lb weight loss in week.
3 |__| Not assessed.	3 |__| Not assessed.

17 INSIGHT

0 |__| Acknowledges being depressed and ill.
1 |X| Acknowledges illness but attributes cause to bad food, climate, overwork, virus, need for rest, etc.
2 |__| Denies being ill at all.

Total score: |1|2|

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