

This Week's Citation Classic

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Overall J E & Gorham D R. The brief psychiatric rating scale.
Psychol. Rep. 10:799-812, 1962.

The Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS) is an instrument originally developed to characterize psychopathology and to measure change in clinical psychopharmacology research. It permits the recording of severity of 18 (originally 16) distinct signs and symptoms of psychopathology based on clinical interview of a patient. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*™ (SSCI®) indicate that this paper was cited a total of 533 times in the period 1963-1977.]

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"In 1959, I joined the staff of the Veterans Administration Central Neuropsychiatric Research Laboratory as a new Ph.D., having recently completed a one-year NSF postdoctoral fellowship in the L. L. Thurstone Psychometric Laboratory at the University of North Carolina. I had the good fortune to be assigned an office adjoining that of the senior clinical psychologist, Donald R. Gorham, who became my friend and champion in getting a research career underway. Everyone at the VA

Central NP Lab was given the title of 'Chief of something or other. I was Chief of Criterion Development, which implied that my job was to create and evaluate instruments for use in the VA multi-hospital cooperative studies in psychiatry. The big issue at that time was whether drugs really were of value in treatment of psychiatric disorders.

"It is fitting, after all these years, to be able to say that Don Gorham was really the father of the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS). He had the clinical experience and the practical awareness to recognize the need, and need created the BPRS. I was eager to apply my newly learned psychometric knowledge and to fulfill my role as Chief of Criterion Development, and we had extraordinary clinical data from previous VA cooperative studies with which to work.

"The BPRS has been a success primarily because it filled a need at a particular period in the development of psychiatry as a rational science. The need was for an instrument that could be used on a broad scale to evaluate treatment effects while at the same time imposing minimum additional burden on over-worked psychiatric staff. It has often been suggested that the success of the BPRS has been due to judicious use of the word 'brief' in the title. In about 1968, a major boost was given the BPRS when it was designated as one standard bit of data to be collected in most NIMH grant-supported clinical drug studies for several succeeding years. If any credit at all is due the present writer, it is for permitting the course of my career to be largely determined by a simple contribution that was so lightly considered at the time."