

RISK ASSESSMENT:

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- What is the purpose of risk assessment
- What is a risk assessment
- How a risk assessment is used

Use risk Assessments Forensics vs Corrections

■ **Forensics**

- Not responsible
- Indefinite term
- Hospital setting
- Therapy focused

■ **Corrections**

- Responsible
- Definite terms
- Jail/penitentiary
- Control focus

What is a risk assessment?

- It is a probability statement about the likelihood of “an event” happening.

Risk is an Abstract

■ Risk is uncertain

- A hazard or threat that is not completely understood
- Predicted with uncertainty

■ Risk is complex

- Nature, severity, frequency, imminence – not just a probability statement

■ Risk is inferential

- The perception that something will happen: it does not exist physically

■ Risk is contextual

- Happens in a context: it is dependent on environmental condition.

Risk is Dynamic

- It changes over time
 - Hazards change
 - Situations change
 - Information changes
 - Inferences change

Assessing Risk:

- Gathering of information to assist in a decision
 - **Not** as simple as providing a diagnosis
 - **Not** simply looking at a set of test scores or risk factors: must consider the individual
 - Understand how and why someone decided to commit violence in the past
 - Try to determine the conditions under which they might become violent again

Goal of Risk Assessment

- **Prevent Violence**

- More specifically

- Understand the risk posed
- Identify relevant risk factors
- Guide intervention
- Improve consistency of decisions

Risk Measurement

- Two basic types of data are used in prediction equations
 - A. Historical information or information that doesn't change - STATIC factors.
 - B. Information or variables that can change over time or with treatment - DYNAMIC factors.

Risk Measurement Cont'd

- Historically there have been two methods
- A clinical judgment
 - Subject to assessor bias
- B actuarial scales
 - Not individualized
 - Ignores dynamic factors

Risk management Cont'd

- More recent development in risk assessment instruments are:
- Structured professional Judgment
 - Combine both
 - Comprehensive evaluation, structured yet flexible.

Historical Data or Static Factors

- highly stable factors (e.g., personality disorders)
- the best predictors for long-term recidivism
- no information on risk management strategies
- does not detect changes in the level of risk over time.
- Therefore: need to assess the contribution of dynamic variables

Dynamic variables

- characteristics that can change
- increase or decrease the probability of re-offending
- *Stable dynamic factors* (i.e., remain unchanged for months or years
- e.g., alcoholism)
- help decision-making about release and treatment.

Dynamic Variables (continued)

- *Acute dynamic factors* (i.e., change rapidly, minutes, hours, and days
- e.g., mood, intoxication)
- of interest for planning supervision
- may assist in predicting offense timing

Dynamic Variables (continued)

Summary:

- Static factors predict long-term recidivism
- Dynamic factors short term prediction of violent behaviour and aid in planning treatment and supervision goals.

Three Risk Assessment Instruments

- *PCL-R2* (Psychopathy Checklist- Revised 2nd Edition, R. Hare, 2003)
- not a risk assessment tool, per se
- uses file review, interview data and collateral info to rate events and behaviours
- associated with *psychopathy*
- Interpersonal, affective, lifestyle and antisocial facets
- has implications for risk management

Instruments continued

- *The Violent Risk Appraisal Guide (VRAG)*
- (Harris, Rice & Quinsey, 1993/2006)
- an actuarial tool; a static measure of risk.
- 12 items: 9 historical; 3 relate to the index offense; unlikely to change much over time.
- does not consider change related to treatment
- Norms originally established with a patient population that may not be representative today

Instruments continued

- *HCR-20* (Webster, Douglas, Eaves, & Hart, 1997)
- a measure of risk, which combines static and dynamic factors
- aligns risk markers from the past, present and future
- a conceptual model for assessing dangerousness
- historical, clinical and risk management factors
- risk estimated by the clinician, on a qualitative scale
- (i.e., low, medium, high risk)

Violence and Mental illness

- Schizophrenic males are 4x more likely to be violent than normal males
- Schizophrenic females are 8x more likely to be violent than normal females
- As high as 40% of schizophrenic males would have qualified for a diagnosis of conduct disorder as a child

Use of Risk Assessments

- Risk assessment helps to identify potentially dangerous individuals.
- Directs case management to help minimize dangerous situations.
- May actually reduce violent re-offending.

Case Studies

- Study 1 comments
- Study 2 comments

Thanks, that's it I'm done

Any questions?