Mental State Examination

• What is it?
• How do we do it?
• What do we look at?
• Mental State Examination is an art
• ‘A mysterious art passed down from generation to generation of psychiatrists’ (Simon Bainbridge 2010)
• There are no right or wrong mental state examinations, just good and bad
Mental State Examination

• So what is a good Mental State Examination?
• Remember it is a snapshot of how that person presented there and then
• Best way to learn?
✓ Practice, practice and then practice some more
• I learnt by doing mental states on newsreaders, Tony has suggested politicians (who said psychiatry wasn’t interesting?)
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As with any art, different people have different ways of doing it

• Tony will encourage you to do ‘BOATPISS’
• Those that are working in Counties may see ‘BATOMI”
• I am going to go through it the way the College do it

! Remember, there are no right and wrong ways

• You say potato, I say potatoe
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- Chose one from:
  - Pirates
  - Aliens
  - Cowboys
  - Superheros
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- Appearance
- I want you to be obsessive
- It is your introduction, a chance to grab the examiners attention, impress them
- What do we look at, want to comment on?
  Advice: start at the top and work down............
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• Behaviour
• Once again be obsessive (but not too much, you have impressed the examiner, do not go overboard)
• What do we want to comment on?
  Advice: be careful of subjective comments such as ‘friendly’ or ‘hostile’
• They are not descriptive and mean different things to different people
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• Speech
• Certain mental illnesses are reflected in characteristic speech patterns
• Speech is the most reliable way to access thoughts
• What do we comment on?
  ! Advice: When describing pressure of speech state whether you were able to interrupt
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• Mood
• Mood is different from affect
• Affect = mood reactivity
• We want to assess both objective and subjective mood
• How do we do that?

Advice: Think of affect and mood as in the weather. Four seasons in one day? Mood is the weather now, affect is how the weather has been today
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• Thoughts
• Remember thoughts and speech are closely intertwined
• What do we look at?
• A delusion is a fixed false belief contrary to educational, societal and religious standards
• Is it acceptable to place delusions in this section?

! Advice: Read up the different forms of thought disorder (difficult for an actor to mimic! ;-)
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- Perceptions
- Perception is a sensation in the presence of a stimulus
- What is an hallucination?
- What is an illusion?
- What are the different types of hallucination?

Advice: Visual hallucinations are associated with organic pathology (old ladies and UTI’s)
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• Cognitive assessment
• The best during a short psychiatric interview is Folstein’s Mini Mental State Examination
• Describe areas the patient dropped marks in

Advice: Serial sevens is too dependant on education, use ‘WORLD’ backwards
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• Insight
• Insight is multifactorial
• Insight into suffering mental illness
• Insight into the need to take medication
• Insight into the need to stay in hospital
• Insight into the need to engage with services

Advice: Describe the level of insight with regard to the above
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- Safety
- Looking at risks to self, risks to others and risk of self neglect
- Anyone under the Mental Health will fulfil one of these criteria

Advice: Look at the Section papers of people under the Mental Health Act and see if you can work out what risks there are
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• Important indicators of risk
• The most reliable assessor of risk we have is past behaviour
• What the patient is saying
• Male, age (over 65 for suicide, under 25 for violence), alcohol or drug abuse, lives alone, unemployed, chronic physical illness, antisocial traits, family history of suicide, culture of violence, antisocial traits
Mental State Examination

- Common Pitfalls
- Normal/abnormal (what is normal?)
- Unusual behaviour (what is unusual?)
- Bizarre (what is bizarre?)
- Delusion without evidence to back it up
- Not describing your statements enough ie ‘thought disorder’ without specifying which

Advice: I will kick your ass to hell and back if I see any of these

😊 Enjoy and good luck!