



***PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR ADULTS (PESQ-A)***

Manual

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INTRODUCTION

The Personal Experience Screening Questionnaire for Adults (PESQ-A) meets a continuing need to screen for the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by adults. The PESQ-A gives substance abuse service providers and community health officials a brief, standardized self-report measure that yields preliminary information about an individual's drug abuse patterns. Because drug abuse is a complex behavior, the PESQ-A also helps to identify some psychosocial problems that may accompany substance abuse. It can assist service providers and law enforcement personnel in making appropriate referrals for more complete evaluation of substance abuse and related psychosocial difficulties.

Drug abuse treatment for adults no longer focuses mainly on alcoholism. Consequently, the need has increased for sensitive substance abuse instruments that are not focused largely or wholly on alcohol abuse (Gilmore, Stinchfield, & Winters, 1988; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1994; Popkin, Kannenberg, Lacey, & Waller, 1988). As more and more adults enter treatment having abused multiple psychoactive substances, service providers are being required to expand their screening and treatment referral strategies. The PESQ-A is specifically designed to address the need for greater scope in screening for the varied problems related to substance abuse. The PESQ-A can inform decisions about the need for further assessment and is a companion to the Personal Experience Inventory for Adults (PEI-A; WPS Product No. W-310), the assessment instrument from which it was derived.

The PESQ-A is recommended for use with those 19 years of age or older. It typically can be administered in 10 minutes, and is easily scored by hand in just a few minutes. Because it is simple to score and interpret, the PESQ-A is appropriate for use by a wide range of health professionals.

PESQ-A Content

The PESQ-A has three parts. The Problem Severity section (Part I) consists of 25 items that address the client's current substance use. The Defensiveness and

Psychosocial Indicators section (Part II) consists of 10 items related to psychosocial adjustment and 5 items that address "faking good" (defensiveness) tendencies. The Recent Drug Use section (Part III) measures the use of alcohol and other drugs over the previous year.

Applications and Limitations

The PESQ-A is a screening instrument designed to help determine if there is a need for a more complete assessment of problems associated with adults' use of alcohol and other drugs. It does not yield a specific diagnosis of substance abuse, nor is it geared toward describing in great detail the various clinical features of drug involvement. The PESQ-A is appropriate for use in settings where clients suspected of having problems associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs are evaluated for intervention or treatment, and in epidemiological surveys estimating the prevalence of substance abuse within a given community.

PESQ-A results may indicate the need for a comprehensive drug abuse assessment. Such a complete assessment should include the use of a more detailed self-report drug abuse measure, such as the PEI-A, as well as interviews with significant others, behavioral observations, laboratory analyses, and other medical and psychological tests. Ideally, this form of evaluation will converge on a clear picture of the client's problems and his or her suitability for treatment.

In addition to its application in clinical settings, the PESQ-A can be used for research on adult substance abuse. For example, it may be appropriate to define groups based on the Problem Severity score. The instrument may also serve as a pre- and post-treatment measure in treatment outcome studies.

PESQ-A users are expected to have appropriate training in test construction and the principles of testing. They should be familiar with the contents of this manual, and with the guidelines presented in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999).