Difficult Patients Psychiatry – Primary Care

Are they different?

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Heart Sink Patients

There are patients in every practice who give the

doctor and staff a feeling of "heartsink" every time they consult.

 They evoke an overwhelming mixture of

exasperation, defeat, and sometimes plain dislike that causes the heart to sink when they consult.

Ellis, a general practitioner, coined the phrase "dysphoria" to define "the feelings felt in the pit of your stomach when their names are seen on the morning's appointment list."

O'Dowd, TC, British Medical Journal 1988

Hateful Patients

"Hateful patients" are not those with whom the physician has an occasional personality clash. As defined here they are those whom most physicians dread. The insatiable dependency of "hateful patients" leads to behaviors that group them into four stereotypes: dependent *clingers*, entitled *demanders*, manipulative *help-rejecters* and self-destructive *deniers*."

Groves, JE NEJM 1978

Hahn SR J Clin Epidemiology1994

- 113 primary care outpatients
- 10-20 % Difficult (30 item DDPQ)
- Difficulty independent of age, race, sex, total number and most types of medical diagnoses
- Difficult patients:
  - Multiple somatic complaints
  - Axis I psychiatric diagnosis
  - Personality Disorder

Hahn SR   J Gen Int Med 1996

- 627 primary care outpatients

- 15 % Difficult

- Difficult patients:
  - More likely to have psychiatric dx (67% v 25%)
  - More functional impairment
  - Higher healthcare utilization
  - Lower satisfaction with care

STPPBRN Difficult Patients

- Pilot Study September 2009
- 11 psychiatrists
- 492 patients
- Do you have a negative reaction to this patient? Yes / No
- What is patient diagnosis?
- 10% of patients

STPPBRN Difficult Patients

- Systematic assessment

- What is prevalence of Difficult Patients in psychiatric practice?

- What patient characteristics are associated with difficulty?

- What psychiatrist characteristics are associated with difficulty?

- How do difficult psychiatric patients compare to difficult primary care patients?

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- Patient Variables

- Doctor Variables

- Rating Difficulty

Data Collection – Patient Variables

FRONT

All answers to this questionnaire are strictly confidential.		
Card #	Date:____/____/____	Site ID_____
Setting:	☐ Office/Out-Pt ☐ In-pt ☐ phone ☐ email Age: _____	

Demographic	Sex: M / F	Age: _____	Race: Wh Hsp Blk Asn Othr	Language issue: Yes No
	Payer: Govt (Medi/Tricare) PVT Insurance Self Pay			
	New / Estab	Appt Duration: <19 min 20-30min 45-50min >59 min		

Check all Diagnoses. **CIRCLE 1'**	☐ MDD/Dysthymia ☐ Panic/GAD/OCD/SAD ☐ Schizophrenia ☐ Bipolar Disorder ☐ PTSD ☐ Alc/Substance ☐ ADHD/Impulse Cntrl ☐ Eating Disorder ☐ Cognitive Disorder ☐ Axis II Cluster A-avoid-odd, B-dramatic-erratic, C-anxious-fearful ☐Axis III Chronic Pain / Fatigue / Cardiac / GI / Neuro Other (Specify)
Current Medications	(number only) Psychotropic_____ Other_____

How Difficult is this Patient?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not At all	Borderline	Mild	Moderate	Markedly	Severe	Amongst the Most

Data Collection – Physician Variables

- Age

- Sex

- years in practice (MIT,   < 7yr, 7-15 yr, > 15 yr)

- practice setting (solo,   2-5, Group > 6)

- # hours worked per week (<40 hr,   40 – 45 hr, 46-50 hr, >50 hr)

- ***role: med management vs. psychotherapist***

Data Collection – Difficulty Rating

BACK

(DDPR-10)	Not at all						A Great deal
How much are you looking forward to this patient's next visit after seeing this patient today?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How "frustrating" do you find this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How manipulative is this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
To what extent are you frustrated by this patient's vague complaints?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How self-destructive is this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do you find yourself secretly hoping this patient will not return?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How at ease did you feel when you were with this patient today?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How time-consuming is caring for this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How enthusiastic do you feel about caring for this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
How difficult is it to communicate with this patient?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Is Patient in Psychotherapy? N / Y.   If yes, with you? N / Y

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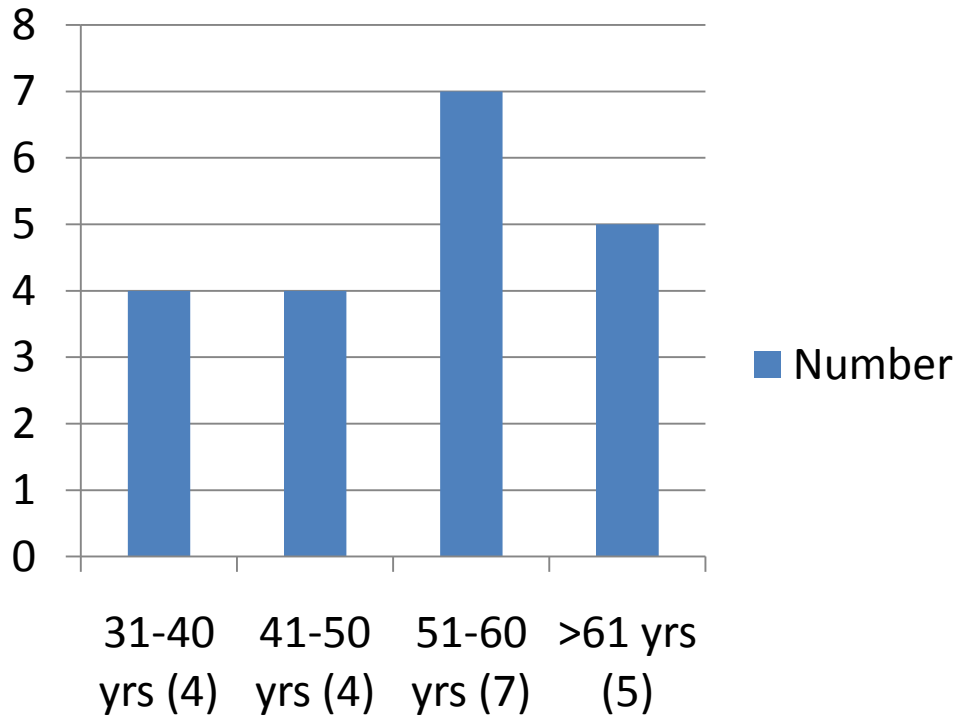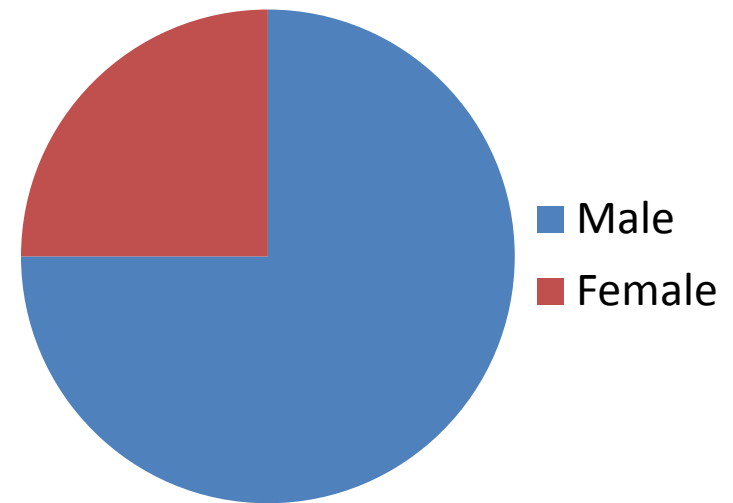UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER®
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Procedure

- The data was collected during the Month of April 2010

- 20 psychiatrists collected cards on 50 patients each either consecutively or by choosing one to two days a week to collect cards on their patients.

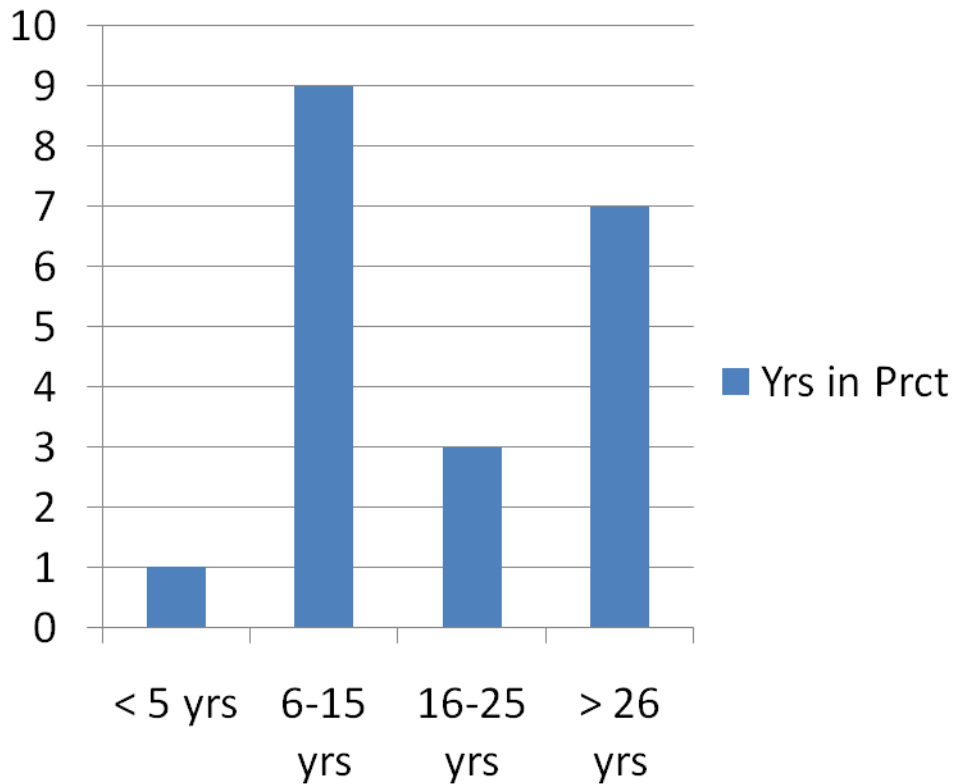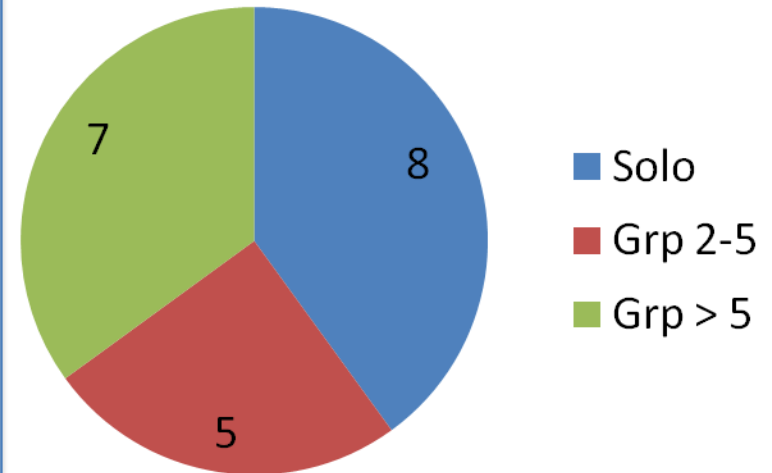# Psychiatrist Characteristics – Age and Sex

Age

Bar chart showing Number by age group:
- 31-40 yrs (4): 4
- 41-50 yrs (4): 4
- 51-60 yrs (7): 7
- >61 yrs (5): 5

Sex

Pie chart showing Male and Female.

Psychiatrist Demographics

Years in Practice

Practice Setting
- Solo: 8
- Grp 2-5: 5
- Grp > 5: 7

Time in Current Setting
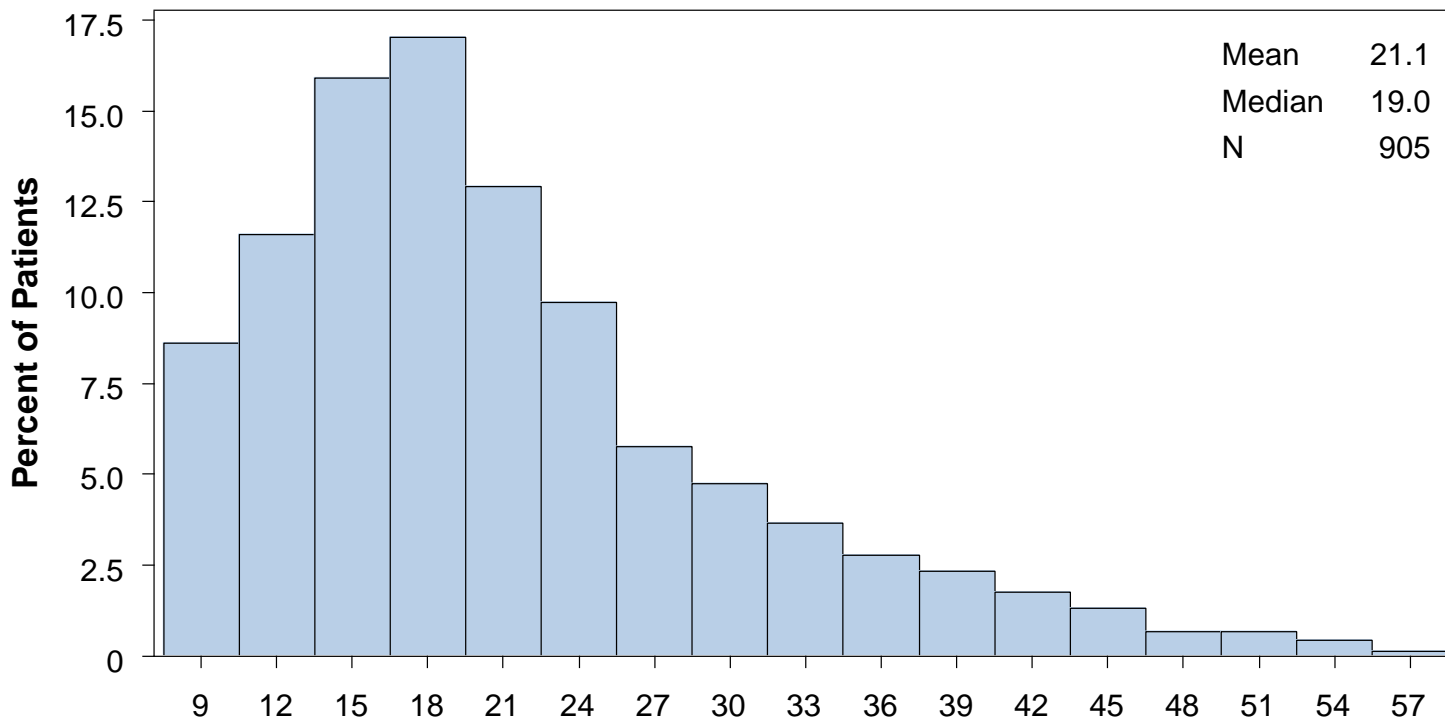Mean : 12.1 yrs (10.7 sd)
Median: 8.5 yrs
Min: 1 yr   Max: 38 yrs

Patient Characteristics

DDPRQ-10 Difficulty Score for 905 Patients

Psychiatry PBRN Card Study 2 (17 June 2010)
The Difficult Doctor-Patient Relationship Questionnaire
Ten-Item Version (DDPRQ-10)
Based on a DDPRQ-10 score > 30, out of 905 patients, 133 were Difficult

Item[a]	% of Patients Rated Difficult by Item[b]	
	Difficult (n=133)	Not Difficult (n=772)
1. How much are you looking forward to this patients next visit after today?[c]	92	38
2. How frustrating do you find this patient?	80	9
3. How manipulative is this patient?	46	3
4. To what extent are you frustrated by this patients vague complaints?	55	4
5. How self-destructive is this patient?	52	6
6. Do you find yourself secretly hoping this patient will not return?	54	2
7. How at ease did you feel with this patient today?[c]	64	18
8. How time-consuming is caring for this patient?	61	10
9. How enthusiastic do you feel about caring for this patient?[c]	90	34
10. How difficult is it to communicate with this patient?	53	6

Difficult Patient Characteristics

- The following items were significantly associated with an **increased** risk of being identified as difficult:
  - Diagnosis: Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Eating Disorder, any Personality Disorder, and Cognitive Disorder
  - Appointment Duration: < 19 minutes
  - Payor Source: Government (Medicaid, Medicare, TriCare)
  - Psychotropic medication

Difficult Patient Characteristics

- The following items were significantly associated with an **decreased** risk of being identified as difficult:

  – Diagnosis: Depressive Disorder, Anxiety Disorder

  – Psychotherapy: In psychotherapy, In psychotherapy with psychiatrist

Difficult Patient Characteristics

- The following items did not differentiate difficult from non difficult patients:
  - Diagnosis: PTSD, ADHD, any Axis III disorder
  - Age, Gender, or patient status

Difficult Doctors

- There were no significant characteristics distinguishing "burdened" psychiatrists from "nonburdened" psychiatrists.

- This would include:
  - years in practice,
  - type of practice,
  - payor source,
  - using psychotherapy, or
  - number of medications prescribed.

Conclusions

- Difficult patients are present in primary care and psychiatric practices in the same prevalence, ~ 15%

- Somatization, unexplained physical complaints, is a significant source of difficulty for primary care patients but not psychiatric patients