THE BEHAVIOURAL VITAL SIGNS (BVS) TOOL

DID YOU KNOW...

1. Did you know that it is essential to know the target cluster(s)/symptom(s) one is treating to guide and monitor non-pharmacological approaches and pharmacological treatment?

2. Did you know that once the target cluster(s)/symptom(s) are identified, their magnitude can be quantified (the BVS Tool)?

3. Did you know that the BVS Tool helps in assessing the efficacy of the interventions?

KEY TEACHING POINTS

- Characterize the behaviour precisely with special attention to the circumstances under which it occurs, when it started, and whether onset was gradual or sudden.

- The symptom of “agitation” can be part of one or more behavioural clusters.

- Prescribing medication for behavioural disturbances in dementia requires systematic measurements of target symptoms, their frequency, severity, and impact. It also helps monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

- The ongoing measurement of target symptoms requires:
  - Direct assessment by interview and examination
  - Proxy reports from caregivers.

Assessment and Monitoring Review

- The authors examined several tools for assessing and monitoring BPSD and found that there is no ideal practical tool for clinical use.

- Some of these tools are in Appendix A. Each is useful in many ways, but has several limitations, e.g., time, ease of availability, lack of established cut-off scores, regional differences in usage.

- We suggest a user-friendly, one-page, observational chart for monitoring of BPSD called “The Behavioural Vital Signs (BVS) Tool.”
Instructions on How to Use the Behavioural Vital Signs Tool

Rationale:
The Behavioural Vital Signs Tool is different from other scales in that it:
1. rates global overall impression of the patient’s behaviours.
2. minimizes detailed, lengthy charting.
3. Allows for tracking of behaviours over time in an easy, user-friendly way.

The Behavioural Vital Signs Tool may be implemented by the physician, nurse, or caregiver. A healthcare professional with a working knowledge of the tool will train others on how to use it.

The Behavioural Vital Signs Tool is a **two-step charting method** for behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

**Step 1. Identify behaviours**

**SIDE A:** Highlight all the behaviours in the clusters as well as the symptoms of agitation exhibited by the patient during the chosen time period.
- The time period is flexible and may be ordered “BVS per shift” or “BVS per day.”

**Step 2. Monitor behaviours**

**SIDE B:** Using the scale given (from 1 to 5), **rate:**
- F = Overall Behaviour Frequency
- S = Severity (How difficult is it to distract or redirect the patient?)
- I = Impact (Potential harm to self/others)

Then, mark the overall rating of behaviour disturbance—clusters and symptoms exhibited by the patient during the chosen time period on the chart.

Start a new sheet each time a new set of significant new behaviours emerges.

A sample completed Behavioural Vital Signs Tool is on the next page, followed by a template to be copied for your use.
### SIDE A

#### BEHAVIOURAL VITAL SIGNS (BVS)

**Patient Name:** ______________________  **Age:** __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CLUSTERS</strong></th>
<th><strong>SYMPTOMS OF AGITATION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delusions (of)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hallucinations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People stealing things Not recognizing one’s own house or surroundings Not recognizing spouse (or other caretaker) “imposter” False belief of abandonment (e.g., to an institution) False belief of infidelity Suspiciousness or paranoia other than above</td>
<td>Visual Auditory Olfactory (false perception of smell) Haptic (false perception of touch or surface sensation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- **SIDE A** – highlight all the behaviours in the clusters and symptoms of agitation
- **SIDE B** – rate behaviour frequency, severity, and impact, THEN mark the overall rating of behaviour disturbance – clusters and symptoms

Start a new sheet each time a new set of significant new behaviours emerges.

---

**Definition of Agitation**

- Some patients have symptoms that do not neatly fit into the better-defined symptom complexes of BPSD (e.g., psychosis, depression, or anxiety).
- These symptoms are consigned to the “grab bag” category of agitation.
- Agitation can be defined as inappropriate verbal, vocal, or motor activity that is not judged by an outside observer to result directly from the needs or confusion of the person.
### Side B

**Patient Name:** ______________________

**Age:** __________

**Place checkmarks in chart below according to your assessment based on the above criteria.**

Transfer your markings to the next page to visually see the frequency, severity and impact of behaviours over time.

### Instructions

**Side A**
- **Highlight** all the behaviours in the clusters and symptoms of agitation

**Side B**
- **Rate** behaviour frequency, severity, and impact, **then**
- **Mark** the overall rating of behaviour disturbance – clusters and symptoms

Start a new sheet each time a new set of significant new behaviours emerges.

### Place checkmarks in chart below according to your assessment based on the above criteria.

Transfer your markings to the next page to visually see the frequency, severity and impact of behaviours over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overall rating of behaviour disturbance – clusters and symptoms

**Overall rating** of behaviour disturbance – clusters and symptoms

**Time Frame**
- Choose time frame being rated:
  - **Shift**
  - **Day**

### Name of Person Completing Form (Print): __________________________

**Signature:** __________________________
TRACKING OF GLOBAL OVERALL IMPRESSION

Transfer your markings from SIDE B to the charts below to visually see the frequency, severity and impact of behaviours over time.

F = Overall Behaviour Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

S = Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

I = Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

Comments:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________