

Table 10-4: The Mental Status Exam in Primary Practice

Elements of the Complete Psychiatric History	History of psychiatric disorders in patient and family
	Number of psychiatric hospitalizations
	History of outpatient mental health treatment
	History of psychotropic medications used by patient or family members (note those deemed effective)
	History of suicidal ideation or violence in patient or family
	History of education and performance in school
	History of occupational functioning; current status
	Family/other support
	Legal history
	Risk behavior history
Elements of the Mental Status Examination	Assessment of General Appearance and Behavior
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance: hygiene, grooming, clothing appropriate for the season and occasion, worn appropriately
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior: sits quietly, paces, impulsive, disorganized
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude: irritable, belligerent, cooperative
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech: slow, rapid, soft, loud, slurred, spontaneous or minimal
	Assessment of Insight and Judgment about Current Illness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the patient understand what is happening?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the person attempt to reduce risk to self and others?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current use of drugs and medications and the need for 95% adherence if on antivirals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How able is the person to follow through with directions?
	Assessment of Mood
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the patient feel sad or depressed?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the patient express any ability to enjoy anything?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the patient anxious or irritable?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the patient withdrawn and without much affect?
	Assessment of Suicidality
	Assessment of Thoughts
	A positive response to any of these questions should lead to referral to a psychiatrist.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever felt that your thoughts were being controlled by another person or that others could read your thoughts?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that people are out to get you? That there might be a plot against you?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you hear voices, or see or smell things that others don't?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ever think that the radio or TV is sending you a private message from somewhere else?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard voices tell you to hurt yourself or others? 	

The mental status examination is done by observation and by questioning the patient.