Palo Alto Center for Pulmonary Disease Prevention

Nicotine Withdrawal Symptom (NWS) Scale*

(Instructions, Scoring & Use)

Quantitative NWS Scale Developed by & Scoring Information Prepared by:
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* Measure nicotine withdrawal symptom (NWS) severity score at each visit using this Scale.
* Based on validated Hughes-Hatsukami University of Minnesota Scale.
* This scale quantitatively measures nicotine withdrawal symptom severity. (NB: Professor Hughes advises that the scale NOT be "labeled a withdrawal scale because [patients can be] confused by filling out a 'nicotine withdrawal' scale prior to stopping smoking and will sometimes not report a symptom [after stopping smoking] if they do not believe it is due to withdrawal."343) Accordingly, this scale is named Medical Symptom Check-List.
* To calculate quantitative score:
  o After patient has circled one, and only one, number in each item’s Likert scale, copy the circled number into the open square to the far right.
  * Only “classic” DSM-III-R or DSM-IV nicotine withdrawal symptoms have an open square - ρ - for this purpose (there are 12 included on this scale).
  * The symptoms with a shaded square - - - in the far right column are withdrawal signs or symptoms not classified as such in DSM-III-R or DSM-IV, but which most experts regard as highly likely to be valid nicotine withdrawal symptoms (e.g., #2. Constipation, #12 Difficulty Remaining Asleep, #14. Pimples, or #18. Mouth Sores). Others are potential medication side-effects (e.g., #7. Bizarre/Vivid Dreams or Nightmares or #11. Difficulty Falling Asleep).
* Use this Medical Symptom Check-List to measure NWS severity for several visits before target stop date (TSD)
  o Establishes baseline score out of 48-point max (the higher the score the more severe the patient's nicotine withdrawal)
  o Use at each visit after TSD.
  * Adjust medication(s) and dose(s) to keep nicotine withdrawal symptom score <16/48 points, or <25% of baseline score, whichever is the lower score.
  * Optimal nicotine withdrawal symptom score <8/48 points or <5%-10% of baseline score after TSD, whichever is the lower score.
    o With Craving/Desire to Smoke a Cigarette = 0 (to 1, maximum) out of 4 points.
    o And no single withdrawal symptom item accounting for 3-4 points out of the <8/48 points.

Violation of the above goals for suppressing nicotine withdrawal symptoms (NWS) dooms the patient to treatment failure (i.e., return to tobacco use).

This form and scoring instructions may be duplicated without restriction for patient-care or educational purposes.

*This is a quantitative modification of the validated Hughes-Hatsukami Scale that Dr. Sachs reviewed with Dr. Hughes on 2/28/2008. Dr. Sachs and others have used this scale in >600 patients in his clinical practice.