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Letter to the editor

Correlations between self-reported and psychiatrist assessments of well-being among patients with schizophrenia



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Schizophrenia is a chronic disease in which patients may have difficulties in communication such as talking about their unpleasant symptoms or their well-being [1,2]. Many studies have evaluated subjective well-being from a patient's perspective; however, studies concurrently assessing clinicians' perspectives are sparse. This led us to wonder how patients and clinicians might see well-being differently among patients with schizophrenia. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the degree of correlation between 'patient-rated' and 'psychiatrist-rated' well-being scores, using three well-being measurement instruments, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), and the Subjective Well-being under Neuroleptic treatment scale (SWN) [3–5], in a cohort of patients with schizophrenia.

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Songklanagarind Hospital, Thailand. Of patients with schizophrenia aged > 18 years; those who had a hospital admission within the last six months, were unable to speak the Thai language fluently, had severe or unstable medical illness, or had any substance dependence were excluded. This project received approval from the local institutional review board.

An existing Thai version of the SWLS was used, while the SHS and SWN were translated from English to Thai by two Thai psychiatrists (W.A. and T.T.), and were then back-translated by an independent, professional translator. The patients completed all three well-being instruments, either alone or with the support of a research assistant. The psychiatrists, blinded to the patient scores, also assessed the patients' well-being using the same tools. The correlations between the 'patient-rated' and 'psychiatrist-rated' well-being scores were assessed via Pearson correlation coefficients. The process of preparation and data collection are described in the online Supplemental Table S1.

Forty patients with schizophrenia (22 men) were recruited, mean

age 43.7 years (SD 14.4). The results revealed significant correlations between 'patient-rated' and 'psychiatrist-rated' well-being scores of all three measurements (Fig. 1). The SWN showed the strongest correlation ($r = 0.719, p < 0.001$), followed by the SWLS ($r = 0.542, p < 0.001$) and SHS ($r = 0.364, p = 0.021$).

The study found that overall the patients and psychiatrists had quite different views on the patient's well-being, with Pearson correlations as low as 0.36. The SWN yielded the highest correlation, which might be due to the fact that this tool aims to assess subjective well-being towards medication use [5], thus the common interests between patient and psychiatrist, particularly in terms of avoiding adverse drug effects, could enhance this agreement [6]. However, overall the patient-clinician correlations differed widely for the three measurements, similar to previous studies examining quality of life [7,8]. Factors underlying this discrepancy could be the differences in content, structure, and psychometric properties of the three measurements [3–5]. Most importantly, the study clearly suggests that clinicians' opinions about whether patients are - or should be - happy may not actually match what patients want or how they feel. These findings may be somewhat limited by the small sample size, and thus the study did not have adequate power to investigate any associations between well-being scores and clinical characteristics of patients with schizophrenia.

In conclusion, this study found that clinicians' sense of patients' well-being only modestly correlated with what the patients reported as their own well-being. This highlights a need for continued research to find better ways for clinicians and patients to better align their goals around subjective well-being, so that clinicians can work more consistently towards helping patients achieve goals that improve their quality of life.

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhospsych.2018.11.001>.

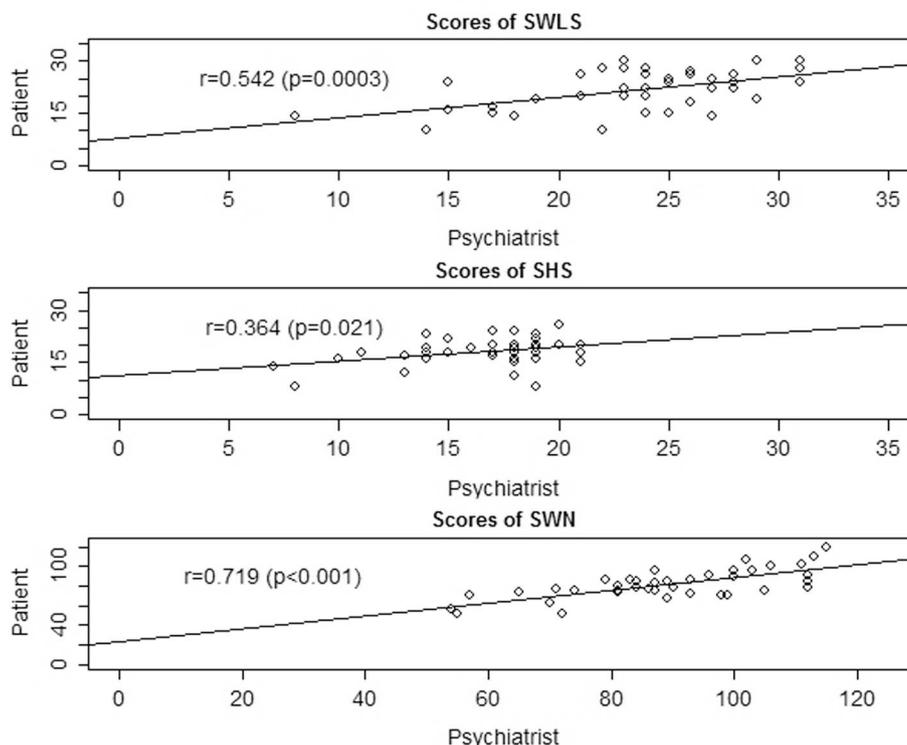


Figure 1. The correlations of three well-being measurements, SWLS, SHS and SWN, between patient and psychiatrist assessments.

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