

The CAGE Questionnaire

The CAGE Questionnaire is a combination of 4 simple questions that can be used for the screening of patients for alcoholism. A total of 2 or more positive answers indicates a positive history of alcoholism. Studies suggest that physicians from different specialties miss the diagnosis of alcoholism in the great majority of patients under their care during hospital admission. A history of alcoholism may indicate maladaptive behaviour and poor coping strategies, particularly when faced with life stresses. These same maladaptive mechanisms may interfere with the adequate management of pain and other symptoms.

This questionnaire has to be completed as part of the medical history. If it is completed as part of the baseline assessment of the patient it becomes much more natural and the patient is less likely to feel defensive.

Please note that all the questions are asked in regards to the whole life of the patient. Many times the patients may answer no to the questions because they interpret that this applies to the last six months or five years during which they have been abstaining from alcohol. It is important to stress that they should not use any artificial deadlines but refer to whole life history.

The validity of the CAGE Questionnaire decreases if it is asked after asking about the amount of alcohol or drugs ingested. Therefore, please respect the order of asking first the CAGE questions, and then the volume of alcohol.

Addiction Assessment:

1. Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
2. Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
4. Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning or to get rid of a hangover (Eye-opener)?

(Two or more affirmatives = probable diagnosis of alcoholism 2/4 = a positive CAGE)