Purpose of Risk Assessments
- There are around 200 different risk assessment tools, and each tool was developed with a different use, population, setting, and purpose in mind.
- In general, they can be used to predict the risk of future violence, general recidivism, sexual violence, and violent recidivism.
- Third and fourth generation assessments consider both static (e.g., criminal history, age, gender) and dynamic (e.g., antisocial behaviors, substance use) factors when determining risk level.
- The fourth generation of risk assessments align with the Risk-Need-Responsivity model and measure an individual's risk of recidivism or future criminal behavior, his or her individual needs, and how receptive he or she will be to interventions (Giguere & Lussier, 2016).

Most Common Risk Assessments
- Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS)
    o Created to help probation officers decide which interventions would work best with different probationers, but is being used to aid in sentencing decisions
    o Considers static and dynamic factors
    o Exact algorithm has not been made available
- Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R)
    o Designed to classify people as high, low, or medium risk so that decisions can be made regarding the appropriate level of supervision for offenders and identify intervention areas
    o Considers static and dynamic factors
- Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI)
    o Designed to evaluate risk level and aid in treatment planning in forensic settings (an updated version of LSI-R)
    o Research conducted by the developers suggests that predictive validity is greater for LS/CMI than LSI-R
- Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (VRAG)
    o Assesses risk of future violence among men who have already committed violence
    o 12-item actuarial instrument
    o Validated for use with male inmates with mental illness, but questions have been raised regarding validity with women
- Others include: Static-99, the Historical, Clinical, and Risk Management Violence Risk Assessment Scheme (HCR-20), the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), and the Wisconsin Risk Needs assessment

Issues and Concerns
- Very little existing research on the use of risk assessments in mental health courts (MHCs).
    o Bonfine, Ritter, & Munetz (2016) examined whether an association exists between LSI-R score and termination from MHC and found that a high LSI-R score was associated with termination.

Jennifer Erwin, JD, MSW
PhD Student, Social Work
University of Tennessee
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- Few independent studies demonstrating reliability and validity of the assessment tools in different settings, with different populations.
- Questions have been raised as to whether some of the variables used to determine risk are proxies for race.
- If fourth generation assessment tools are being used to make treatment recommendations, then other types of validity – beyond predictive – need to be considered and evaluated.
- More research is needed regarding how individual elements of risk assessments contribute to overall scores.
- The risk assessment tools fail to consider protective factors.
- Anyone who is administering an assessment needs to receive proper training on procedures and scoring.

Ways MHCs Could Use Risk Assessments
- Be more deliberate in using risk assessments in conjunction with RNR
- Check the reliability and validity of the particular assessment instrument with court population
- Use assessment tool to monitor and measure change over time
- Consider developing different tracts based on participants' criminogenic risk level

Jennifer Erwin, JD, MSW
PhD Student, Social Work
University of Tennessee
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Jennifer Erwin, JD, MSW
PhD Student, Social Work
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