

Cut down, Annoyed, Guilty and Eye-opener (CAGE): description, strengths and knowledge gaps^[1]

Purpose

The four item CAGE screens for alcohol dependency.^[2]

Drug(s) of Concern

- Alcohol

Time-frame(s) of Interest

- Lifetime¹

Populations Tested

- Males^[2]
- Young people^[3]
- Adults^[2,4,5]
- Older people^[6,7]

Settings Tested

- AOD specialist services^{[2],[8]}
- Primary care^[9,10]
- Emergency department^[11]
- General Hospital^[12,13]
- Mental health^[8,13]

Diagnostics

- Utility:
- ✓ Short and quick (can be administered in under one minute)^[5]
 - ✓ Reliable in distinguishing presence/absence of alcohol dependence^[2]
- Psychometric properties:
- Can detect 95% or more of people who are dependent on alcohol in clinical settings,^[14] including medical and surgical inpatients, ambulatory medical patients, and psychiatric inpatients (average sensitivity 0.71, specificity 0.90)^[5]
 - Less useful in detecting risky drinking ^[5]
 - Lower sensitivity and specificity than other instruments (e.g., AUDIT)^[4]

CAGE

Please tick (✓) one box for each question

Q1. Have you ever felt you ought to Cut down on your drinking? Yes 1 No 0

Q2. Have people Annoyed you by criticising your drinking? Yes 1 No 0

Q3. Have you ever felt bad or Guilty about your drinking? Yes 1 No 0

Q4. Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (Eye-opener)? Yes 1 No 0

Total Score:

Administrator, Rater, Scoring and Interpretation

Administrator: Clinician/Worker
 Client self-complete
 Online

Rater: Client

Scoring & interpretation: The CAGE comprises four questions.

Score 1 point for each question answered “yes”.

A total score is calculated by summing the points obtained for each CAGE question. The minimum total score possible is 0, and the maximum possible total score possible is 4 (i.e. total score range: 0-4).

Obtaining a total score of two or more, indicates alcohol dependence.^[4]

Resources

Tool citation:	Ewing, J.A. <i>Detecting alcoholism: the CAGE questionnaire</i> . JAMA, 1984. 252(14): 1905-1907. ^[2]
Copyright:	Available in the public domain. May be downloaded and used with appropriate acknowledgement.
Training/manual:	None found.
Brief intervention:	None found.
Other:	None found.

Knowledge Gaps

The CAGE has been designed to screen for alcohol dependence, not risky drinking.^[14] The CAGE became available in 1970.^[2] Whether the CAGE can detect dependency according to the latest DSM-5 criteria has yet to be established. The initial validation of the CAGE was conducted with men. Diagnostic studies with women participants have found the CAGE to have poor sensitivity.^[15]

Within the Australian context:

- Content and construct validity, and responsiveness is uncertain
- Tool acceptance by administrators and raters is unclear.

References

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