

Overview of the Opioid Risk Tool (ORT)

The Opioid Risk Tool (ORT) is an office-based, 5-question assessment designed to predict which patients may develop aberrant, drug-related behaviors based on known risk factors associated with abuse or addiction. The ORT can either be self-administered by the patient at the initial clinic visit or completed by the physician as part of the patient interview. Before being prescribed opioids for chronic pain, the patient is assigned a risk category based on the ORT score: low (0-3), medium (4-7), or high (≥ 8). The purpose is not to deny high-risk patients treatment, but to set a level of clinical monitoring appropriate to the risk level. The ORT displayed excellent discrimination in predicting opioid abuse-related behaviors in a single-site study of 185 chronic-pain patients. Of the low-risk patients studied, 94% did not demonstrate any aberrant behavior, while in the high-risk patients, 91% did display an aberrant behavior. Of the medium-risk patients, only 28% showed any opioid-related aberrant behavior.¹

The ORT derives a gender-specific total score from 10 weighted items: family and personal history of alcohol abuse, illegal drug abuse, and prescription drug abuse; age; history of preadolescent sexual abuse; and the presence of depression or other psychological disease (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia). These items address genetics as well as the in-home and out-of-home environment, and were selected based on a rigorous review of the scientific literature. Based on these known risk factors, the probability of opioid abuse increases with the number of positive responses.

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1. Webster LR, Webster RM. Predicting aberrant behaviors in opioid-treated patients: preliminary validation of the opioid risk tool. *Pain Med.* 2005;6(6):432-442.