

GRiST for Mental Health Risk Screening

Q. What is GRiST?

A. GRiST is a risk-screening tool that will be universally available over the web. It is designed to help assess whether those with mental health difficulties are at risk.

Q. What sort of risk?

A. People with mental health difficulties, on occasion, may be a risk to themselves or to others. GRiST is designed to assess these risks in areas such as suicide, self harm, and violence. It is also designed to assess whether they may be at risk of self-neglect with resulting social exclusion.

Q. How does it assess these risks?

A. GRiST has been designed with input from a multidisciplinary panel of experts who are experienced in the treatment of mental disorder and the potential risks that may result. GRiST represents a consensus of this expertise and is further informed by empirical data.

Q. Who will use GRiST?

A. GRiST has been designed to be quickly and easily completed, requires no specialist training, and can be used by both medical professionals and laypersons alike. As a web-based tool it will provide estimates of potential risk in an easily understandable way and will also provide advice on what should be done next.

Q. Where will it be used?

A. As GRiST is available over the web, it can be used in any situation where those potentially at risk may present themselves. For example, this could be at a GP's, at accident and emergency departments, at a police station, at magistrate courts, or at any social support agency. Equally, mental health professionals in community and hospital settings can use it. The versatility of GRiST is one of its unique features.

Q. Why do we need a tool like GRiST?

A. There are a number of reasons. People who may be at risk will more often present themselves at front-line services rather than at established psychiatric services. More often than not they will present themselves at a time when they may be in crisis, which could be any time of the day or night. Unfortunately, staff at frontline services often do not have the necessary expertise to assess risk. This can result in the loss of opportunities to access appropriate specialist services and social support agencies.

Q. How will GRiST help?

A. For non-specialist frontline staff, GRiST will provide the expert knowledge to assist in assessing a variety of potential risks, thereby empowering them to make an assessment. As already mentioned, the GRiST web site will provide an estimate of risk and advice on what should be done next. Therefore, not only will GRiST assist in assessment, but as a universally available tool it will also provide the language for frontline staff to translate these findings to more appropriate services, at a time when these services are required.

Q Is GRiST a way of joining up services?

A Yes! This is one of the unique features of GRiST and points to its versatility in different situations. In frontline services it not only empowers staff to make an assessment, but its availability to them will help prompt for questions about risk that they might not normally ask. Conversely, in certain situations referrals to specialist services may be made that are not appropriate. GRiST will help screen these out, thereby freeing up specialist services to concentrate on those who most require them.

GRiST is also a means of passing information between specialist psychiatric and social services that may address different perspectives on why someone may present at risk. As a universally available tool, GRiST provides a common language that all services can access and share, thereby overcoming organisational and geographical boundaries.

Q. Are there any other potential benefits of GRiST?

A. There could be several, both in its use and in informing us of our understanding of risk.

GRiST could potentially be used to track clinical change over a period of time. For example, if someone is at risk of suicide and receiving specialist help, GRiST could be used at regular intervals to track whether this risk is increasing or decreasing.

Also, as a web based tool, GRiST, will provide a constantly-evolving database that will update and refine our knowledge of risk, thereby informing researchers and practitioners. Consequently, it can become an educational resource to be used as a teaching aid for clinicians.