

Clinical and Research Limitations in the Use of Phallometric Testing with Sexual Offenders

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Abstract

In many settings, particularly in North America, phallometric evaluations of sexual arousal are routinely conducted with sexual offenders and these evaluation procedures also serve as research instruments. There are, however, problems with the psychometric bases of these assessments, and studies reporting their use have so many idiosyncratic features that comparisons are of dubious value. Evidence concerning the reliability and criterion validity of phallometric testing leaves a lot to be desired, although the research has suggested a limited value in predicting subsequent recidivism. On the bases of these observations the routine use of phallometric assessments as part of the evaluation of sexual offenders is not recommended.

Key Words: Phallometry, sexual offenders, validity, reliability, limitations

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