

University Lecture: Clinical Psychology (Level: 3rd Year)

Subject: English for Psychology

Topic: Diagnostic Techniques in Clinical Practice

1. Introduction to Psychological Diagnosis

Accurate diagnosis of mental health conditions, particularly those involving a **disconnection from reality** (psychosis), is essential for effective treatment. A complete assessment is required, which integrates several techniques to differentiate between various disorders.

2. Core Components of Assessment

- **The Clinical Interview:** This is regarded as the **essential component** of psychiatric diagnosis. It involves a detailed discussion of the patient's symptoms, personal history, and daily functioning.
- **Mental Status Exam (MSE):** A critical tool where the clinician observes the patient's current state. Key clues include:
 - **Disorganized Thinking:** Inferred from speech patterns like **derailment**, **word salad**, or **tangentiality**.
 - **Abnormal Motor Behavior:** Such as **catatonia** (negativism, mutism, or staring) or psychomotor agitation.
 - **Negative Symptoms:** Identifying a lack of emotional expression (**alogia**) or a decrease in self-motivated activities (**avolition**).

3. Standardized Tools and Criteria

Clinicians primarily use the **DSM-5-TR** (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) to provide criteria for symptom duration and severity. Tools like the **SCID** (Structured Clinical Interview for DSM) offer a systematic approach to ensure diagnostic accuracy.

4. Medical and Laboratory Work-up

It is vital to rule out substance use or medical causes for psychological symptoms.

- **Routine Laboratory Tests:** For all new presentations of psychosis, clinicians should check vitals, **CBC** (Complete Blood Count), **BMP** (Basic Metabolic Panel), and a lipid panel.
- **Specialized Screening:** Depending on the case, tests for **TSH** (thyroid function), **B12 levels**, and **UDS** (Urine Drug Screen) are conducted.
- **Neuroimaging:** Techniques like **MRI** or **CT scans** are used to identify structural brain abnormalities.

5. Differential Diagnosis Strategies

A key part of the diagnostic technique is the **timeline** and symptom requirement:

- **Timeline:** Symptoms lasting less than 1 month indicate **Brief Psychotic Disorder**, while those persisting for more than 6 months with functional decline suggest **Schizophrenia**.

- **Mood vs. Psychosis:** In **Schizoaffective Disorder**, psychotic symptoms must persist for at least 2 weeks even when mood symptoms (depression or mania) are absent.

Terminology Table

English Term	Arabic Equivalent
Clinical Interview	المقابلة العيادية
Differential Diagnosis	التشخيص الفارق
Mental Status Exam (MSE)	فحص الحالة العقلية
Disorganized Speech	الكلام غير المنظم
Negative Symptoms	الأعراض السلبية
Avolition	فقدان الإرادة / الدافعية
Catatonia	الجمود (الكاتاتونيا)
Neuroimaging	التصوير العصبي
Timeline	الجدول الزمني
Implicit Bias	التحيز الضمني
Rule out	استبعاد (سبب طبي)
Functional Impairment	التدهور الوظيفي