

# THE WETC PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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"Find the Truth, Tell the Story"

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## What attorneys need to know about the MMPI-2 before cross-examining a psych doctor

What should I be looking for in the doctor's discussion of the MMPI-2 in a psych evaluation report? This is a question that I was recently asked by an attorney who had a psych report written by a psychiatrist in conjunction with an evaluation for a claim of a psychiatric injury. I absolutely love this type of question!

First, I explained to the attorney that the MMPI-2 is the 1989 revision of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a test that was originally developed in the 1930's. A majority of the psychologists and psychiatrists who are working in the medical-legal area appear to be using the MMPI-2 in preference to the MMPI. However there is a growing body of research literature that indicates that the MMPI-2 may not be as valid an instrument as the original MMPI. The reason for this is quite simple. There are three validity scales and ten clinical scales on both the MMPI and MMPI-2. Once the validity scale scores demonstrate that a person has been shown to be responding to the MMPI-2 items in an honest and frank manner, statements are made about the patient's psychological status by looking at the pattern of scoring on the highest two or three clinical scale scores. Research on the meaning of the clinical scale scores dates back to the 1930's. However, there is a growing body of published literature indicating that research done on the MMPI that shows a relationship between the individual's clinical scale scores and their

*"An Apricot™ is a written-analysis of a psych report that you have that may not be in your favor. I find every flaw in the report, explain why they are flaws, and provide documentation from the published psychological and psychiatric literature that demonstrate that these flaws exist."*

psychological status may not be applicable to the MMPI-2 (e.g., Greene, R.L., The MMPI-2/MMPI An Interpretive Manual, Second Edition, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 2000).

Second, I gave the attorney four tips to use when examining the doctor's report of the MMPI-2 test data. Those four tips are: 1) Look to see if the doctor provided the MMPI-2 validity scale scores, 2) Look to see if the F Scale T-Score the doctor reported is 65 or higher, 3) Look to see if the L (Lie) Scale T-Score the doctor reported is 65 or higher, 4) Determine if all the scores are possible for the patient based on their gender. All of the validity scales and clinical scales on the MMPI-2 are described with a T-Score. In this regard, T-Scores on the validity scales and the clinical scales on the MMPI-2 have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Further, T-Scores of 65 or greater are interpretable.

Tip #1 - Look to see if the doctor provided the MMPI-2 validity scale scores

The MMPI-2 is a version of the MMPI, a test that is the gold standard of psychological tests for medical-legal examinations. The MMPI-2 is capable of generating objective test scores that can be presented to the court to provide information both about the patient's credibility and any possible psychopathology. Specifically, the validity scale scores, such as the F Scale score, the L (Lie) Scale score, and the K Scale score, are useful in providing information about the patient's credibility. Thus, when a psych doctor has declined to provide the patient's MMPI scores in their

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report, you should consider it a “red flag” as the doctor is quite possibly trying to hide something. At the very least, the doctor has prevented the reader of their report from verifying the basis for their summary conclusions. Of course, at that point you should do everything you can to get the test scores from the doctor.

Tip #2 - Look to see if the F Scale T-Score the doctor reported is 65 or higher

As stated above, the F Scale score on the MMPI-2 is useful in shedding light on the test-taker’s credibility. In this regard, the F Scale is one of the validity scales of the MMPI. According to the psychological literature, an MMPI-2 validity scale score at or above the level of 65 is interpretable. For over 70 years the F Scale has been known to be an effective device in detecting attempted simulators or what some might call “fakers” or “Malingerers.” An F Scale T-Score of 65 or larger indicates the patient was attempting to simulate symptoms or “fake.” The only reasonable alternatives are the patient is (a) psychotic, or, (b) did not read the questions. In the rare case of the latter there will be other scores indicative of random responding.

Tip #3 - Look to see if the L (Lie) Scale T-Score the doctor reported is 65 or higher

Similar to the F Scale, the L (Lie) Scale is a validity scale that can provide information about the patient’s credibility and test-taking attitude. T-Scores that are 65 or higher on the L (Lie) Scale are indicative of individuals who are not being honest and straightforward during the examination’s procedures.

Tip #4 - Determine if all the scores are possible for the patient based on their gender

For some unknown reason, psych doctors tend to report MMPI-2 scores that are impossible for the patient to obtain. In this regard, the numbers within the tables

appearing on pages 54 and 55 of the MMPI-2 testing manual contain all of the possible T-Scores that can be gotten on the MMPI-2. Those tables are reproduced in my newsletter from May, 2010, available for download at my website, [www.DrLeckartWETC.com](http://www.DrLeckartWETC.com). Many scores that might seem reasonable to the uninitiated are simply impossible to obtain. Once you have determined that the doctor has reported a score that is not possible, it is reasonable to conclude the doctor has made a monumental error in the scoring and/or the reporting of the patient’s MMPI-2 scores, an error that would constitute a substantial flaw in their report.

Finally, I suggested to the attorney that after considering the above information, she should develop questions to use in cross-examining the doctor that would expose the report’s substantial flaws.

The tips discussed above are essential to effectively cross-examining a psych doctor about psych reports written for the court. The tips can also be helpful in preparing a brief for the court. When you have a psych report that you feel should be challenged, and you would like more information about Apricots™, please visit [www.DrLeckartWETC.com](http://www.DrLeckartWETC.com) where you can also download a sample Apricot™. An Apricot™ describes a psych report’s flaws using non-technical terms, discusses effective strategies to use in approaching the doctor’s cross-examination, and provides a script of questions to get those flaws on the record. An Apricot™ is also a work product privileged report that can be used in any jurisdiction.

Lastly, if after having done due diligence you believe you need additional help in understanding or interpreting the MMPI scores feel free to give me a call for a free MMPI telephone consultation.

## FREE MMPI Score Validation involving testing reports of a

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