Personality Disorders and Aging

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Models of personality

- Dimensional
- Categorical
Dimensional model

- Clusters of stable traits
- MMPI, Eysenck Personality Inventory
- Cohort vs. aging effects
Categorical model

- Defined typologies
- DSM-IV
- Mature and immature categories
Diagnosis of personality disorders in the elderly

- Coexistence of mood disorders
- Time-frame problem
- Age bias in definitions
Personality and depression

- Predispositional model
- Etiologic relationship
- Scarring relationship
- Modifying influence
Time-frame problems

- DSM-IV specifications
- Lifelong personality disorders attenuated in old age
- Late-onset personality disorders
Age bias

- “Social and occupational functioning”
- Appropriate anger and depression
- “Intolerance of being alone”
Using DSM-IV in older adults

- Age bias
- Establishing baseline function
- Longitudinal history
Cluster A – Odd-eccentric

- Paranoid
- Schizoid
- Schizotypal
Cluster B – Dramatic-emotional

- Antisocial
- Borderline
- Histrionic
- Narcissistic
Cluster C – Anxious-fearful

- Avoidant
- Dependent
- Passive aggressive
- Obsessive compulsive
Psychodynamics in geriatric personality disorders

- Stress-strain model
“Stimulus, response. Stimulus, response. Don’t you ever *think?*”
Psychodynamics in geriatric personality disorders

- Stress-strain model
- Lifetime pattern of maladaptive relationships
- Losses magnify fear of abandonment
- Physical limitations force dependency
- Loss of narcissistic gratification
- Limited capacity to grieve
Special issues

- Trauma
  - Childhood sexual abuse
  - Other traumatic experiences

- Alcohol
  - Comorbidity
  - Etiologic relationship
  - Alcohol in family members
Principles of therapy

- Treat Axis I disorders
- Clarify physical status
- Assess impact of life events
- Establish limited, realistic goals
- Select appropriate time frame
- Use family and institutional supports
- Consider environmental manipulations