

A-WPTAS: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is A-WPTAS

The Abbreviated Westmead Post Traumatic Amnesia Scale (A-WPTAS) state form provides a consistent framework and format for assessing and monitoring patients with post traumatic amnesia (PTA) in an acute care setting. The objective is to identify patients with prolonged PTA.

2. Which patients can I perform the A-WPTAS assessment on?

As a general rule, the A-WPTAS assessment may be performed on any individual who meet the criteria for use, regardless of other concurrent medical.

The criteria for use are:

1. Within 24hrs of injury with a suspected closed head injury
2. Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) 13-15
3. Eyes open spontaneously (GCS eye score of 4)
4. Obeys commands (GCS motor score of 6)

3. Can the A-WPTAS assessment be performed on those who are intoxicated?

Patients who are intoxicated can be given the assessment if they meet the criteria for use and are compliant with the assessment. If they score less than 18/18, this needs to be explained and a traumatic brain injury needs to be excluded.

Intoxicated patients with a head injury are a high risk group and require a thorough clinical assessment and senior clinician input.

4. Can the A-WPTAS assessment be performed on those with a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background (with or without interpreter)?

Staff may attempt to teach the picture cards and use the recognition format to test memory - the picture cards are adjunct to the GCS and key in assessing amnesia. The assessment can be used with interpreter assistance and the interpreter should be asked to translate the questions and repeat the patient's answers following the normal procedure including prompting and recognition formats (as per instructions on page 3 on the form).

5. Can the A-WPTAS assessment be performed on those who are over 61 years?

The scale has been validated with individuals aged between 18 and 61 years. It is recommended to use clinical judgement when administering the scale to individuals outside of these ages, identifying the patient's pre-injury functional level and suitability for the assessment.

6. Can the A-WPTAS assessment be performed on paediatric patients?

It has been shown that the A-WPTAS assessment is a reliable tool to assess the presence of post traumatic amnesia in children 7 years of age and older. Clinicians using the tool should be mindful of factors that may influence a child's performance including distraction and coaching from parents.

7. Can the A-WPTAS assessment be performed in a ward environment?

The scale can be performed anywhere a standard Glasgow Coma Scale assessment is conducted, as long as the patient meets the criteria for use and the clinical staff are trained in performing the assessment.

8. Should the A-WPTAS assessment be conducted hourly for at least 4 hours, as typically done with other vital signs?

The A-WPTAS assessment should be ceased once the patient scores 18/18, but clinical judgement is required. There is no evidence to support the need for repeated assessment once the score is 18/18, as the patient is judged to be no longer in PTA.