

## Malingering

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Pain assessment questionnaires have begun to include sections on validity. This study tests the accuracy of such an approach as used in the Patient Pain Profile (PPP).

According to DSM IV malingering is "the intentional production of false or grossly exaggerated physical or psychological symptoms, motivated by external incentives".

Forty patients with chronic pain were compared with 20 healthy students who were instructed to lie about chronic pain but not to be detected. Both groups completed the PPP.

Most of the patients were already in receipt of workers compensation and would seem to have had no financial incentive to deceive.

There was no discernable difference between these groups in the validity scale section of the PPP. Fakers tended to score more highly on the depression scale.

### Comment

This was not a particularly well-designed study, making use of inexperienced malingerers having unmatched gender profiles and a high proportion of psychology undergraduates in the faker group. However, it does highlight the importance of thoroughly testing the validity scales in the popular patient profiling instruments. Other instruments could be tested for their ability to detect fakers e.g. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Symptom Checklist 90.

It would seem unlikely that any such test would ever be able to determine why there was falsehood or gross exaggeration.

