

The AMDP System

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(Editors)

Manual for Assessment
and Documentation of
Psychopathology in
Psychiatry

9th edition

The AMDP System

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Preface

I was delighted to be asked by the editors of the ninth edition of the AMDP System to support the translation of the manual for an English-speaking audience. Psychopathology is having something of a resurgence in contemporary psychiatry, and it will be a great benefit to clinicians and researchers to have this manual at their disposal. There have been concerns expressed about the existing taxonomies of mental disorders (Insel et al., 2010), and how they may limit scientific and clinical progress. As part of this concern, psychopathology and the experiences of our patients are seen to be once again an increasingly important area of investigation to be combined with other levels of study. Empirically, clinicians and researchers have become more interested in transdiagnostic areas of psychopathology, for example, mood instability (Broome, Saunders, Harrison, & Marwaha, 2015), which span traditional categories, and in the subtle experiences that herald the development of psychiatric illness, and which may wax and wane with time, and interact with the normal developmental processes of adolescence and young adulthood (Nelson, McGorry, Wichers, Wigman, & Hartmann, 2017; Marwaha, Thompson, Uptegrove, & Broome, 2016). Psychopathology is by no means a subject which should remain wholly in textbooks, but a vibrant area of research where there is new knowledge to be found.

To develop new insights in psychopathology requires clinicians and researchers to have a strong and comprehensive grasp of those experiences that patients have reported to clinicians over the years. A focus in psychiatry and in training that equates its knowledge of symptoms as only those that are contained in lists required for diagnoses in international classifications will lead to the theoretical foundations of our discipline being diluted (Andreasen, 2006), and limit future developments. Hence, there is a strong impetus for clinicians and researchers to develop a robust grasp of psychopathology, over and beyond the constraints of ICD-10 and DSM-5. The AMDP System, alongside the Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (SCAN; World Health Organization, 1994), offers a systematic account of psychopathology, with examples of the experiences,

and clear guidance on how to elicit, rate and score the items. As such, the AMDP manual will be a valuable tool for trainers and trainees in learning clinical psychiatry and in how they may develop their skills in interviewing and assessment. Further, psychopathology has an important role in not only diagnosis and nosography, but it is also a person-oriented discipline as well as being illness-oriented (Stanghellini & Broome 2014). Psychopathology is an important source of personal meaning to be explored with our patients in a therapeutic relationship. These two modes of psychopathology both aid the ethics of clinical work with those with psychiatric illness and support delineating and elucidating the subjective changes in mental disorder which will aid the search for subpersonal causal mechanisms and, in turn, better treatments.

I commend the AMDP System as a clear, coherent, and comprehensive account of psychopathology and as a great resource for clinicians and researchers, whether novices or experienced interviewers. Alongside the German, French, Brazilian-Portuguese and other planned language editions, this English edition will now allow the manual to reach those who train and work outside the German-speaking countries so they can reap the benefits of the European tradition of psychiatry and psychopathology.

The editors would like to thank Mrs Ursula Drew for her excellent work on translating the German edition into English, and the staff of Hogrefe Publishing, namely Robert Dimbleby, Christin Wozniak, and Lisa Bennett, for their professionalism and support in bringing this project to fruition.

Professor Matthew R. Broome
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September 2017

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Preface to the Ninth German Edition

The publication of this ninth revised and expanded edition of the AMDP System coincides with the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Association for Methodology and Documentation in Psychiatry (AMDP) in 1965. Since the formation of the association, psychiatry and, in particular, the field of psychopathology, have experienced significant change and development. The AMDP System was initially created by a German–Swiss working group to systematically measure psychopathology in order to assess reliably and validly the effect of pharmacological interventions on psychopathology.

Whilst the initial rapid advances within psychopharmacology of the mid-20th century have not been maintained, the development of a growing number of increasingly specialised rating scales for psychiatric disorders and psychopathology has continued. The advantages of using such rating scales are undisputed but their use may come at the expense of a comprehensive psychiatric assessment, including a detailed mental state examination, and hence there is the risk of subtle, yet important, symptoms being missed.

The AMDP System, in contrast, pursues a decidedly comprehensive descriptive psychopathological approach to minimise the danger of significant symptoms being overlooked during initial examination. Thus, the AMDP System assumes a crucial role in the acquisition of fundamental knowledge in the field of psychopathology. When students of medicine and psychology encounter people with mental health disorders for the first time, it is challenging for them to describe the experiences patients relate to them in appropriate, concise and comprehensive terms, and it is here the AMDP System demonstrates its utility. Throughout clinical training and beyond, the AMDP System is a central tool in the classification and description of psychopathology in clinical records and communication. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the AMDP System is regularly cited and referred to in the majority of contemporary German textbooks on psychiatry and psychotherapy.

In this latest edition, the definitions of the 100 psychopathological and 40 somatic core symptoms contained in the AMDP System have been linguistically and descriptively refined. The Appendix contains a new section on syndrome formation. The manual's core register of individual symptoms, however, remains, as in previous editions, unchanged to facilitate comparative research and to ensure the continued successful employment of the manual's established syndrome rating scales. Taking account of developments in recent years in the description and rating of psychopathological symptoms, this latest edition of the AMDP System has been extended by an additional eleven psychopathological and three somatic symptoms. These symptoms may, where appropriate, be used to supplement the manual's core register of individual symptoms.

The physical appearance of the ninth revised edition of the AMDP manual has also changed with an improved cover design, binding, paper quality and colour scheme. In this respect, we are especially indebted to Hogrefe Company (Germany), our publishers, in whose portfolio the AMDP manual has featured as a long-standing title for many years.

*M. Rösler
R.-D. Stieglitz
W. Trabert*

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Introduction

The Association for Methodology and Documentation in Psychiatry (AMDP) was initially founded as the AMP in 1965 and was born out of a close cooperation between a German working group (Bente, Engelmeier, Heinrich, Hippus, Schmitt) and its Swiss counterpart (Angst, Bategay, Cornu, Dick, Heimann, Pöldinger, Schmidlin, Weis). Shortly after its inception, the Association was joined by the Viennese Clinic in Austria (Bernier). Over the years that followed, AMDP members conceptualised and developed a system for the documentation and assessment of personal history and psychopathological and somatic symptoms in a computer-readable format.

This system, today utilized in various psychiatric centres in different countries, has generated an extensive data base of clinical knowledge and expertise useful for comparative analysis and research purposes, which is also in a format amenable to immediate electronic data processing (see Section 1.6). The AMDP System, as it has been known since 1979, has thus served to establish internationally unified and standardised approaches to psychiatric diagnosis and research, and to this end both the AMP and the AMDP manuals have been translated into a range of different languages (e.g., English, French, Italian; see Bobon, Bauermann, Angst, Helmchen & Hippus, 1983, for an overview).

The purpose of this latest edition of the manual is to summarise the commonly accepted conventions, definitions, and descriptions adopted within the AMDP System, to serve as an introduction for the neophyte as well as a reference tool for the experienced practitioner, and to enable a unified, generalizable application of the system.

In this ninth revised edition, the AMDP System comprises documentation (contained on a four-page form) for the recording and assessment of data in the following areas:

- Personal history
- Psychopathological symptoms
- Somatic symptoms

The contents of the sections on personal data and somatic and psychopathological findings are based on the empirical analyses of the documented case histories of more than 2,500 patients (see Pietzcker et al., 1983). In the majority of these analysed case histories, the disorders in question fell into the category of disorders which would traditionally have been referred to as endogenous psychoses (especially schizophrenia, schizoaffective psychosis, and affective psychoses).

The results of several independent interrater-reliability studies, together with the criteria of frequency, specificity, sensitivity, reliability and clinical significance, were applied in the choice of symptom characteristics. The definitions of psychopathological symptoms contained in the manual build on those of traditional German descriptive psychopathology.

Since 1965, the AMDP has benefited from the efforts of a large number of colleagues who, at various stages over the years and with differing levels of intensity, have contributed significantly to the association's endeavours. In the following, special mention is given to those colleagues who were involved in the development of the AMDP System and, in particular, this present ninth edition.

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