

# H-SPRINT E in Post-Earthquake Haiti: Transcultural Use of Psychometric Instruments



## Brain & Society Theme | Trauma & Timing

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The ethnopsychology of post-earthquake Haiti is of keen interest to healthcare providers because the symptoms of trauma-related mental illness in Haiti are often incongruent with the Western framework of a mind-body dichotomy. Findings from the Haiti Short PTSD Rating Interview Expanded (H-SPRINT E) revealed cross-culture translational issues and suggest a need for more culturally sensitive psychometric tools.

## INTRODUCTION

- The 7.0 magnitude 2010 Haiti earthquake had a death toll of over 100,000 and devastated the lives of many more.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is intense psychological distress following an experience of trauma
- The DSM-V groups PTSD symptoms into three clusters: re-experiencing, avoidance and numbing, and hyperarousal
- ***What is at stake in the translation of psychometric instruments?***
- A previous factor analysis study suggests that avoidance and numbing are distinct PTSD symptoms (Asmundson, Stapleton, & Taylor, 2004).



Patients waiting outside a clinic to receive treatment  
(Wikimedia Commons)

## METHODOLOGY

- In 2010 and 2011, researchers conducted the H-SPRINT E with 97 Haiti earthquake survivors
- Interviewers split the 12-question SPRINT E into 19 questions for better diagnostic power
- A qualitative analysis of the results of the H-SPRINT E was used to observe differences between a traditional diagnosis of PTSD and the trauma-related illnesses in Haiti

## CONCLUSIONS

**Translational issues stem from both linguistic structure and culture-specific experiences of trauma and illness.**

- The results of the H-SPRINT E support the idea that avoidance and numbing are not good predictors PTSD severity in all cultures.
- Interviews reported a high incidence of avoidance and low levels of social numbing, which can perhaps be attributed to the spiritual and social coping mechanisms unique to Haiti.
- Other symptoms like drug use, eating patterns, and “forgetting” are also experienced differently by earthquake survivors.



Earthquake damage in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti (Wikimedia Commons)

## IMPLICATIONS

- Using a DSM framework for trauma-related illness may not address the needs of earthquake survivors in Haiti.
- While indexes have been developed for depression and anxiety in Haitian populations, there needs to be a more effective assessment for PTSD.
- Developing transcultural assessment scales or local instruments may lead to more effective therapeutic dialogue.

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