



The Role of Mental Health in Forensic Risk Assessments: Predicting Future Violence

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Abstract

Forensic risk assessments play a critical role in predicting future violence, informing decisions in criminal justice systems such as sentencing, parole, and treatment planning. A key component of these assessments is the evaluation of an individual's mental health. Mental health conditions, particularly personality disorders, psychosis, and substance use disorders, are often associated with increased risk for violent behavior. This article explores the role of mental health in forensic risk assessments, reviewing the complex interplay between mental health diagnoses, historical risk factors, and situational triggers. Additionally, it examines the tools commonly used in forensic settings, such as structured risk assessment instruments, to assess the likelihood of future violence. Ethical considerations, including the potential for stigmatization and overreliance on mental health diagnoses in predicting violence, are also addressed. Understanding the nuanced role of mental health is crucial in improving the accuracy of forensic risk assessments and promoting fair, evidence-based decision-making in legal contexts.

Keywords: Mental health; Forensic risk assessments; Future violence; Prediction; Risk factors; Structured assessment tools; Ethical considerations; Rehabilitation; Criminal justice

Introduction

Forensic risk assessments serve as a pivotal component in the intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system, particularly in evaluating the potential for future violence [1]. These assessments aim to inform judicial decisions regarding sentencing, parole eligibility, and the necessity for mental health interventions. As mental health issues continue to gain recognition for their impact on behavior, understanding their role in predicting violent outcomes has become increasingly important [2].

Research indicates that certain mental health disorders, including personality disorders, schizophrenia, and severe mood disorders, are associated with heightened risk for violence. However, the relationship between mental health and violent behavior is complex and multifaceted, influenced by a variety of factors such as environmental

dilemmas. Professionals in the field must balance the need for accurate