

**PALLIATIVE CARE GENERAL DATA BASE****The CAGE Questionnaire**

CAGE Assessment:

- |    |  |                              |                             |
|----|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning or a drink to get rid of a hangover (eye-opener)? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please specify: -

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Two or more “yes” responses indicate a positive CAGE

(2/4 = a positive CAGE)

\_\_\_\_\_ / 4 (+ or -)  
(circle one)

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please remember to indicate a positive CAGE score on the ESAS graph. Remove this page once completed and insert it into the patient’s permanent file.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**NOTE:** This assessment is NOT diagnostic of alcoholism or drug abuse. It is used to identify patients who may have used drugs or alcohol to cope with various life stresses. Research has shown that these individuals may be at higher risk of having problems with medications used in palliative care (i.e. opioids or sedatives).

## **PROCEDURE:**

The CAGE questionnaire consists of four simple questions. The term “CAGE” is an acronym derived from these questions (see below). The questionnaire should be completed once as part of an initial multidimensional assessment by a palliative care consultant. When the CAGE questions are included as part of a baseline assessment, they become a natural part of the medical history and there is less chance of eliciting a defensive response from the patient. The CAGE questionnaire screens for problem alcohol use only. It is not designed to screen for other types of substance abuse. The CAGE questions pertain to the whole life of the patient. It is important that the interviewer make this clear to the patient. Questions related to alcohol use that are not part of the CAGE questionnaire should be asked **after** the CAGE questions have been completed. e.g. questions regarding volume of alcohol consumed, date of last alcohol consumption, and periods of abstinence are important parts of a thorough assessment but should be asked after the CAGE questions so as not affect the validity of the CAGE questionnaire (21, 22, 23, 24).

## **ADMINISTERING THE CAGE QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Ask the following questions in the order in which they are listed. Score one point for each affirmative answer. Do not ask any other questions about alcohol use prior to asking these questions.

## **Tips for Use and Interpretation of the CAGE in Palliative Care:**

1. Uncertainty exists regarding the significance of the date of last alcohol consumption. Though even remote problem alcohol use may complicate current symptom management, it should be kept in mind that some patients may have developed more effective coping skills since an earlier period of problem alcohol use. In these patients, a positive CAGE score may not necessarily indicate complicated symptom management.
2. Most patients with a positive CAGE score do achieve stable pain control. However, in the positive CAGE group this occurs at higher opioid doses than in those with negative CAGE scores (25).