

The Internet is not a doctor!

by Rick Paulas

If you Google the phrase "depression test," you aren't likely to stumble upon the Beck Depression Inventory, which is administered by health care professionals around the world and has been the gold standard for measuring the severity of depression since it was first developed in 1961. Instead, your search will likely lead you to a plethora of sites offering any number of unverified quizzes promising to tell you, finally and truly, what's really wrong with you.

Mental health expert and former Psychology Today editor-in-chief, Dr. Robert Epstein, thinks this is a major problem. "The internet is the biggest source of misinformation about mental health that has ever been created," he told VICE. "There are literally thousands of unvalidated mental screening tests." Epstein has ventured to rectify this by developing his own internet-friendly test, the Epstein Mental Health Inventory, a 63-question test available freely at the SEO-optimized DoYouNeedTherapy.com.

Epstein's test is one of the few clinically-tested inventories on the internet—over 3,400 subjects took the first version of the test before it was published. Epstein updated

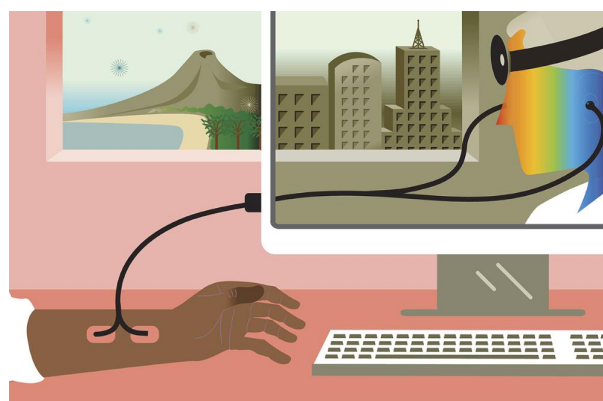


Image by Sally Harrow

the test in 2013, decreasing the reading comprehension level from 10th grade to 6th grade and revising the content to take into account the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Epstein's test follows standards often not upheld by the ones offered on DepressedTest.com or any of the other strange quizzes that are available via pages that end in .net and pop up at the top of Google searches. However, since those dubious tests top the results of search engines, they're the ones most often being clicked on and, thusly, utilized.

A 2011 study shows that nearly 60 percent of clicks are from the top three results of Google searches, while nearly 90 percent of clicks are from the first page. Now, try to remember the last time you went to page two of a search. Not hitting subsequent pages of search results isn't necessarily about laziness on the part of users, but instead something about our trust in the algorithm's divinity.