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Comparison of the accuracy of the 7-item HADS Depression subscale and 14-item total HADS for screening for major depression

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1 **Comparison of the accuracy of the 7-item HADS Depression subscale and 14-item total**
2 **HADS for screening for major depression: a systematic review and individual participant**
3 **data meta-analysis**

4

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198 **Registration and Protocol**

199 The main HADS-D IPDMA was registered in PROSPERO (CRD42015016761), and a
200 protocol was published (Thombs et al., 2016). The present study was not included in the protocol
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202 initiating the study (<https://osf.io/438ak/>).

203 **Data Availability**

204 Data contribution agreements with primary study authors do not include permission to
205 make their data publicly available, although the dataset used in this study will be archived
206 through a McGill University repository (Borealis,
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369

370

371 **Comparison of the accuracy of the 7-item HADS Depression subscale and 14-item total**
372 **HADS for screening for major depression: a systematic review and individual participant**
373 **data meta-analysis**

374

375 **Abstract**

376 The 7-item Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale Depression subscale (HADS-D) and
377 the total score of the 14-item HADS (HADS-T) are both used for major depression screening.
378 Compared to the HADS-D, the HADS-T includes anxiety items and requires more time to
379 complete. We compared the screening accuracy of the HADS-D and HADS-T for major
380 depression detection. We conducted an individual participant data meta-analysis and fit bivariate
381 random-effects models to assess diagnostic accuracy among participants with both HADS-D and
382 HADS-T scores. We identified optimal cutoffs, estimated sensitivity and specificity with 95%
383 confidence intervals (CIs), and compared screening accuracy across paired cutoffs via two-stage
384 and individual-level models. We used a 0.05 equivalence margin to assess equivalency in
385 sensitivity and specificity. 20,700 participants (2,285 major depression cases) from 98 studies
386 were included. Cutoffs of ≥ 7 for the HADS-D (sensitivity 0.79 [0.75, 0.83], specificity 0.78
387 [0.75, 0.80]) and ≥ 15 for the HADS-T (sensitivity 0.79 [0.76, 0.82], specificity 0.81 [0.78,
388 0.83]) minimized the distance to the top-left corner of the receiver operating characteristic curve.
389 Across all sets of paired cutoffs evaluated, differences of sensitivity between HADS-T and
390 HADS-D ranged from -0.05 to 0.01 (0.00 at paired optimal cutoffs), and differences of
391 specificity were within 0.03 for all cutoffs (0.02 to 0.03). The pattern was similar among
392 outpatients, although the HADS-T was slightly (not non-equivalently) more specific among

393 inpatients. The accuracy of HADS-T was equivalent to the HADS-D for detecting major
394 depression. In most settings, the shorter HADS-D would be preferred.

395 **Keywords:** HADS-D, HADS-T, individual participant data meta-analysis, depression
396 screening, diagnostic accuracy

397 **Public significance statements:**

398 The present study suggests that the accuracy of 14-item Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale
399 (HADS-D) and the 7-item HADS Depression subscale (HADS-D) are equivalent for detecting
400 major depression. Using the 7-item HADS-D for depression screening instead of the full 14-item
401 HADS-T has minimal influence on performance of the measure but would reduce patient and
402 participant burden in most clinical and research settings.

403

404 The 14-item Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983)
405 was developed to facilitate the identification of anxiety disorders and major depression in people
406 with a physical illness. The HADS includes two subscales. The 7-item Depression subscale
407 (HADS-D) was designed to assess continuous depressive symptoms and for depression
408 screening, whereas the 7-item Anxiety subscale (HADS-A) was designed to assess and screen for
409 anxiety (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983). Both HADS-D and full HADS total scores (HADS-T) have
410 been used to screen for major depression (Mitchell, Meader, & Symonds, 2010; Vodermaier &
411 Millman, 2011). The HADS-T takes more time to complete and includes anxiety items not
412 specific to depression. Some have suggested, though, that anxiety symptoms should be
413 considered when assessing depression (Schatzberg, 2019). Furthermore, previous reviews have
414 provided some preliminary evidence that HADS-T may perform better than the HADS-D
415 (Mitchell, Meader, & Symonds, 2010; Vodermaier & Millman, 2011).

416 Commonly used HADS-D cutoff thresholds of ≥ 8 for “possible” depression and ≥ 11 for
417 “probable” depression were established in the original validation study, which included only 100
418 participants (11 depression cases) (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983). A recent individual participant
419 data meta-analysis (IPDMA) on HADS-D accuracy to screen for major depression (101 studies;
420 25,574 participants; 2,549 major depression cases) found that a cutoff of ≥ 7 maximized
421 combined sensitivity and specificity across reference standards; standard cutoffs of ≥ 8 and ≥ 11
422 were less sensitive but more specific (Wu, Levis, Sun, et al., 2021). There is not a standard cutoff
423 for screening to detect major depression with the HADS-T.

424 Two previous meta-analyses, both done with studies of cancer patients, have indirectly
425 compared the HADS-D and HADS-T for detecting major depression (Mitchell et al., 2010;
426 Vodermaier & Millman, 2011). Both searched through October 2009 for eligible studies. One

427 evaluated 9 studies that used the HADS-D with a cutoff of 8 or greater and 6 studies that used
428 the HADS-T with a cutoff of 15 (number of participants not reported) (Mitchell et al., 2010),
429 whereas the other included 2-5 studies each in analyses of HADS-D cutoffs of 7, 9, and 11 and
430 HADS-T cutoffs of 15, 17, 19 and 20 (470 to 872 participants per analysis) (Vodermaier &
431 Millman, 2011). Both meta-analyses suggested that the HADS-T may perform better than the
432 HADS-D, but there was a high level of uncertainty due to indirect comparisons between
433 participants from different studies that reported HADS-D and HADS-T results, the small number
434 of total participants, and possible selective outcome reporting bias (Levis et al., 2017; Neupane
435 et al., 2021; Rice & Thombs, 2016; Thombs et al., 2011; Thombs & Rice, 2016) since not all
436 primary studies reported results from the same cutoffs.

437 Using the full 14-item HADS-T for depression screening would be warranted if it is
438 sufficiently more accurate than the shorter 7-item HADS-D to justify the additional time and
439 patient burden involved. We previously assessed the accuracy of the HADS-D using IPDMA
440 (Wu, Levis, Sun, et al., 2021). IPDMA involves a standard systematic review, followed by
441 synthesis of original research data from primary studies, rather than extracting summary data
442 (Riley, Lambert, & Abo-Zaid, 2010). In that IPDMA, we found that diagnostic accuracy of
443 HADS-D was not significantly different for any cutoffs across reference standards based on
444 participant characteristics, including age, sex, cancer diagnosis, country human development
445 index levels, participant recruitment settings, or the study's risk of bias ratings (Wu et al., 2021).
446 In the present study, we included studies from the HADS-D IPDMA where HADS-T scores were
447 provided or could be calculated from individual item scores. Our objectives were to (1) directly
448 compare screening accuracy of the HADS-T and HADS-D for major depression detection using
449 the same participant data across all studies regardless of reference standard, and (2) replicate the

450 comparison among studies that used a semi-structured diagnostic interview [e.g., Structured
451 Clinical Interview for the DSM (SCID) (First, 1995)] as a reference standard, since semi-
452 structured interviews more closely reflect the actual diagnostic process than fully-structured
453 interviews.

454 **Methods**

455 The present study used a subset of studies and participants from our previously conducted
456 HADS-D IPDMA (Wu, Levis, Sun, et al., 2021) for which HADS-T scores were also available.
457 Analyses of HADS-D and HADS-T diagnostic accuracy were conducted according to the
458 HADS-D IPDMA methods (Wu, Levis, Sun, et al., 2021) with the addition of analyses to
459 directly compare HADS-D and HADS-T accuracy.

460 **Dataset eligibility**

461 For the main HADS-D meta-analysis, datasets from articles in any language were eligible
462 for inclusion if (1) they included diagnostic classification for current Major Depressive Disorder
463 (MDD) or Major Depressive Episode (MDE) using Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental
464 Disorders (DSM) (American Psychiatric Association, 1987; 1994; 2000; 2013) or International
465 Classification of Diseases (ICD) (World Health Organization (WHO), 1992) criteria based on a
466 validated semi-structured or fully structured interview; (2) they included total scores for the
467 HADS-D; (3) the diagnostic interview and HADS-D were administered within two weeks of
468 each other, because DSM and ICD major depression diagnostic criteria specify that symptoms
469 must have been present in the last two weeks; (4) participants were ≥ 18 years of age and not
470 recruited from youth or psychiatric settings; and (5) participants were not recruited because they
471 were identified as having symptoms of depression, since screening is done to identify previously
472 unrecognized cases. We focused on MDD and MDE because major guidelines on depression

473 screening have focused on screening for major depression but have not considered screening for
474 less severe conditions, such as dysthymia or persistent depressive disorder, for which treatment
475 options and effectiveness are much less well delineated (Joffres et al., 2013; National
476 Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (UK), 2010; Siu & US Preventive Services Task Force,
477 2016). Consistent with this, few primary studies collect or report diagnostic status for dysthymia
478 or persistent depressive disorder. Datasets where not all participants were eligible were included
479 if primary data allowed selection of eligible participants. For the present study, we only included
480 primary datasets from the HADS-D IPDMA that also provided HADS-T scores or item scores to
481 calculate HADS-T scores.

482 **Search strategy and study selection**

483 A medical librarian searched Medline, Medline In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations
484 and PsycINFO via OvidSP, and Web of Science via ISI Web of Knowledge from inception to
485 October 25, 2018 using a peer-reviewed (McGowan, Sampson, Salzwedel, Cogo, Foerster, &
486 Lefebvre, 2016) search strategy (Supplementary Methods A). We also reviewed reference lists of
487 relevant reviews and queried contributing authors about non-published studies. Search results
488 were uploaded into RefWorks (RefWorks-COS, Bethesda, MD, USA). After de-duplication,
489 unique citations were uploaded into DistillerSR (Evidence Partners, Ottawa, Canada) for
490 tracking search results.

491 Pairs of investigators independently reviewed titles and abstracts for eligibility. If either
492 deemed a study potentially eligible, full-text review was done by two investigators,
493 independently, with disagreements resolved by consensus, consulting a third investigator when
494 necessary. Translators were consulted for languages other than those for which team members
495 were fluent.

496 **Data contribution, extraction, and synthesis**

497 Authors of eligible datasets were invited to contribute de-identified primary data. We
498 emailed corresponding authors of eligible primary studies at least three times, as necessary. If we
499 did not receive a response, we emailed co-authors and attempted to contact corresponding
500 authors by phone.

501 Diagnostic interview and country were extracted from published reports by pairs of
502 investigators independently, with disagreements resolved by consensus. Countries were
503 categorized as “very high”, “high” or “low-medium” development based on the United Nation’s
504 Human Development Index (HDI) for the country for the year of the study publication. The HDI
505 is a statistical composite index that includes indicators of life expectancy, education, and income
506 (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Participant-level data included age, sex,
507 participant recruiting setting, HADS-D scores, HADS-T scores, and major depression status
508 (case or non-case). For defining major depression, we considered MDD or MDE based on the
509 DSM or ICD. If more than one was reported, we prioritized MDE over MDD (because screening
510 would attempt to detect depressive episodes and further interview would determine if the episode
511 is related to MDD, bipolar disorder or persistent depressive disorder). We also prioritized DSM
512 over ICD because most studies use DSM criteria.

513 Individual participant data were converted to a standard format and synthesized into a
514 single dataset with study-level data. We compared published participant characteristics and
515 diagnostic accuracy estimates with results from raw datasets and resolved any discrepancies in
516 consultation with primary study investigators.

517 **Risk of Bias Assessment**

518 Risk of bias of included studies was assessed by two investigators independently using
519 the QUality Assessment of Diagnostic Accuracy Studies-2 tool (QUADAS-2; Supplementary
520 Methods B) (Whiting et al., 2011). Any discrepancies were resolved via consensus with a third
521 investigator involved as necessary. Risk of bias was coded at both study and participant levels
522 since some classifications (e.g., the time between index test and reference standard) may have
523 differed among participants from the same study. The QUADAS-2 results were used to describe
524 the risk of bias of each included study.

525 **Statistical Analyses**

526 To compare the screening accuracy of the HADS-D and HADS-T across relevant cutoffs to
527 detect major depression, we first estimated overall sensitivity and specificity for HADS-D and
528 HADS-T by combining all studies regardless of reference standard. Reference standards used in
529 primary studies included semi-structured interviews (e.g., SCID (First, 1995)), fully structured
530 interviews (the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) excluded) (e.g., Composite
531 International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) (Robins et al., 1988)), and the MINI (Lecrubier et al.,
532 1997; Sheehan et al., 1997). Different types of reference standards have different design and
533 performance characteristics (Levis, Benedetti, et al., 2019; Levis et al., 2020; Wu, Levis,
534 Ioannidis, et al., 2021; Wu, Levis, Sun, et al., 2020), and estimates of sensitivity and specificity
535 differ by type (Negeri, et al., 2021; Levis, Benedetti, et al., 2019; Levis et al., 2020; Wu, Levis,
536 Sun, et al., 2021). It is reasonable to assume, though, that differences in sensitivity and
537 specificity between HADS-D and HADS-T accuracy among the same participants are not
538 associated with reference standard type, since in each primary study the HADS-D and HADS-T
539 were compared to the same reference standard. Thus, our main analysis included all studies
540 regardless of reference standard.

541 Separately, as a sensitivity analysis, to ensure that results would not differ by clinical
542 interview, we repeated all analyses for only studies that used a semi-structured interview as the
543 reference standard. Semi-structured interviews (e.g., SCID (First, 1995), Schedules for Clinical
544 Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (WHO, 1994), Schedule for Affective Disorders and
545 Schizophrenia (Endicott & Spitzer, 1987), and Monash Interview for Liaison Psychiatry (Clarke,
546 Smith, Herrman, & McKenzie, 1998)) are intended to be administered by experienced
547 diagnosticians and are considered to more closely reflect clinical diagnostic procedures than fully
548 structured interviews or the MINI (Brugha, Bebbington, & Jenkins, 1999; Brugha, Jenkins, Taub,
549 Meltzer, & Bebbington, 2001; Nosen & Woody, 2008). We did not conduct additional sensitivity
550 analyses with fully structured interviews or the MINI.

551 Overall and separately, for studies that used a semi-structured reference standard, for all
552 possible cutoffs 0-21 of the HADS-D and 0-42 of the HADS-T, we fitted bivariate random-
553 effects models via Gauss-Hermite quadrature (Riley, Dodd, Craig, Thompson, & Williamson,
554 2008). This is a two-stage meta-analytic approach that models sensitivity and specificity
555 simultaneously and accounts for the correlation between them and the precision of estimates
556 within studies. We also constructed empirical receiver operating characteristic (ROC) plots based
557 on pooled sensitivity and specificity estimates and calculated area under the curves (AUC) for
558 the two tests.

559 To investigate heterogeneity across studies, overall and for studies with a semi-structured
560 reference standard, we generated forest plots for the differences in sensitivity and specificity
561 estimates between the HADS-D and HADS-T for the optimal cutoffs based on pooled results.
562 We also quantified heterogeneity at the optimal cutoffs for the HADS-D and HADS-T by
563 reporting the estimated variances of the random effects for the differences in the HADS-D and

564 HADS-T sensitivity and specificity (τ^2) (Fagerland, Lydersen, & Laake, 2014; Higgins &
565 Thompson, 2002).

566 To compare the diagnostic accuracy of the HADS-D and HADS-T, using the analyses
567 that pooled across reference standards and within semi-structured reference standard category,
568 we first calculated the differences of the AUCs with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Second, we
569 compared the ROC plots visually to determine if one measure consistently perform better than
570 the other across cutoffs. Third, we compared differences in sensitivity and specificity for optimal
571 cutoffs and other cutoffs close to the optimal cutoff to determine if there were differences and the
572 magnitude of any differences. To do this, we identified the optimal cutoff that minimized the
573 values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves (NCSS, 2017) for both HADS-D
574 and HADS-T and a set of other cutoffs that were close to the optimal cutoff. The distance to the
575 top-left corner of the ROC curve for each cutoff value is calculated by $d =$

576 $\sqrt{(1-\text{Sensitivity})^2+(1-\text{Specificity})^2}$ (NCSS, 2017). Since there is no *a priori* method to align
577 cutoffs on the HADS-D and HADS-T that perform most similarly in terms of sensitivity and
578 specificity, we did this based on examination of results and consensus among investigators.

579 Then, we compared the sensitivity and specificity between the HADS-D and HADS-T for pairs
580 of optimal cutoffs and four other pairs of cutoffs close to the optimal; the interval between
581 cutoffs for HADS-T was 2 instead of 1 because HADS-T doubled the length and the total score
582 of HADS-D. For all cutoffs on the HADS-D and HADS-T, 95% CIs for the differences between
583 HADS-D and HADS-T sensitivity and specificity were constructed via a cluster bootstrap
584 approach (Van der Leeden, Busing, & Meijer, 1997; Van der Leeden, Meijer, & Busing, 2008)
585 with resampling at the study and subject level. For each comparison, we ran 1000 iterations of
586 the bootstrap. For each bootstrap iteration, the bivariate random-effects model was fitted to the

587 HADS-D and HADS-T data, and the pooled sensitivities and specificities were computed
588 separately, as described above, for all cutoffs of HADS-D and HADS-T.

589 In addition to comparing the HADS-D and HADS-T with pooling of study-level results,
590 as a sensitivity analysis, we compared sensitivity and specificity of the HADS-D and HADS-T
591 across cutoffs via an individual-level analysis. For the individual-level analysis, for each pair of
592 matched HADS-D and HADS-T cutoffs, we fitted a linear mixed model with the difference
593 between the HADS-D and HADS-T screening results as the outcome. The screening result is
594 dichotomous, either positive = 1 or negative = 0. If the HADS-T screening result was positive
595 (which was 1), but HADS-D was negative (which was 0), the outcome, i.e., the difference
596 between HADS-T and HADS-D results, was $1 - 0 = 1$; if both screening results were positive or
597 negative, the outcome was 0 ($1 - 1$ or $0 - 0$); and if the HADS-T screening result was negative,
598 but HADS-D was positive, the outcome was -1 ($0 - 1 = -1$). This model modeled the differences
599 in sensitivity and specificity simultaneously and included random effects both at the study level.
600 From this model, for each set of HADS-D and HADS-T paired cutoffs, we estimated the
601 difference in sensitivity and specificity between the two tests and associated CIs. These CIs from
602 the bootstrap approach and individual-level analysis allowed us to test whether the sensitivity
603 and specificity of the HADS-T is equivalent to that of the HADS-D based on a pre-specified
604 equivalence margin of $\delta = 0.05$ (Walker & Nowacki, 2011), as we have done in previous studies
605 (Harel et al., 2021; Ishihara et al., 2019; Wu, Levis, Riehm, et al., 2020).

606 As a sensitivity analysis, we compared accuracy of HADS-D and HADS-T results
607 stratified by subgroups based on inpatient and outpatient care settings (we planned to conduct
608 sensitivity analysis in each participant recruit setting, separately, but we were able to do this only
609 for inpatient and outpatient medical settings because there were too few participants from non-

610 medical and mixed inpatient/outpatient settings). In addition, we conducted a subgroup analysis
611 only among patients from cancer studies because meta-analyses (Mitchell et al., 2010;
612 Vodermaier & Millman, 2011) of studies from cancer care settings reported that the HADS-T
613 may perform better than the HADS-D in those settings. We did not conduct the sensitivity
614 analysis to assess whether inclusion of published results from the eligible studies that did not
615 provide raw data influenced results because we did this in the main HADS-D IPDMA and found
616 no differences (Wu et al., 2021).

617 To examine whether measurement differences across participant characteristics,
618 including country, may have influenced our results, we assessed whether sensitivity and
619 specificity differed for the HADS-D based on these characteristics, and then, we re-examined
620 HADS-D and HADS-T differences for any variables where differences were found. To assess
621 possible influences on sensitivity and specificity, we conducted one-stage meta-regressions. In
622 the first step, we repeated the analysis that we did in the main HADS-D IPDMA by interacting
623 all subgrouping variables (age [measured continuously], sex [reference category = female]),
624 country HDI level [reference category = very high], cancer diagnosis [reference category = no],
625 participant recruiting setting [reference category = inpatient specialty care], interactions of
626 QUADAS-2 signaling item responses [reference category = low risk] with logit (sensitivity) and
627 logit (1 – specificity) of the HADS-D (Wu et al., 2021). We conducted these analyses separately
628 by reference standards (semi-structured interview, fully structured interview, MINI), since these
629 types of interviews have been shown to identify different individuals (Wu et al., 2021). In the
630 second step, we added country/language variables to the model (Germany, Spain, Lithuania,
631 Norway, Korea, Japan [reference category = English speaking countries]). These models were
632 restricted to the subset of the studies from countries with more than 500 participants that had

633 complete data for all relevant variables and used a semi-structured interview or the MINI (there
634 were not enough data for the studies that used a fully structured reference standard). Country
635 HDI level was dropped from the model because all countries included in this analysis had very
636 high HDI. For any variables that were found to be associated with the sensitivity or specificity
637 across all cutoffs, we compared accuracy of HADS-D and HADS-T results stratified by
638 subgroups based on these variables.

639 All analyses were run in R (R version R 3.5.0 (R Core Team, 2020) and R Studio
640 version 1.1.423 (RStudio Team, 2020)) using the lme4 package (Bates, Maechler, Bolker, &
641 Walker, 2015).

642 **Registration and Protocol**

643 The main HADS-D IPDMA was registered in PROSPERO (CRD42015016761), and a
644 protocol was published (Thombs et al., 2016). The present study was not included in the protocol
645 for the main HADS-D IPDMA, but a separate protocol was developed and posted online prior to
646 initiating the study (<https://osf.io/438ak/>).

647 **Data Availability**

648 Data contribution agreements with primary study authors do not include permission to
649 make their data publicly available, although the dataset used in this study will be archived
650 through a McGill University repository (Borealis,
651 <https://borealisdata.ca/dataverse/depressdproject/>). The R codes used for the analysis will be
652 made publicly available through the same repository. Requests to access the dataset to verify
653 study results but not for other purposes can be sent to the corresponding authors via the “Access
654 Dataset” function on the repository website.

655 **Results**

656 **Search Results and Inclusion of Primary Data**

657 For the main HADS-D IPDMA, of 14,465 unique titles and abstracts identified from the
658 database search, 13,895 were excluded after title and abstract review and 330 after full-text
659 (Supplementary Table A), leaving 240 eligible articles with data from 165 unique participant
660 samples (Supplementary Figure A). Of the 165 unique samples, 93 (56%) contributed data (66%
661 of eligible participants). In addition, authors of included studies contributed data from 10 studies
662 that were unpublished or did not come up in the search, for a total of 103 HADS-D datasets
663 contributed to our IPDMA. Five studies without HADS individual item scores or separate total
664 scores for the HADS-D and HADS-T were excluded from the present study (see Supplementary
665 Table B2). Thus, 20,700 participants (2,285 major depression cases) from 98 studies were
666 analyzed (91% of 22,755 participants from the 103 HADS-D datasets). Included study
667 characteristics are shown in Supplementary Table B1. Characteristics of eligible studies that did
668 not provide data, including the five studies excluded because they only provided HADS-D or
669 HADS-T total scores, are shown in Supplementary Table B2.

670 Of 98 included studies, 58 used semi-structured interviews to assess major depression
671 (10,311 participants), including 54 that used the SCID (9,676 participants); 31 used the MINI
672 (7,445 participants); and 9 used other. Participant characteristics are shown in Table 1.

673 Supplementary Table C shows QUADAS-2 ratings for included studies. There were only
674 11 studies with “low” risk of bias rating across all QUADAS-2 domains.

675 **Comparison of Screening Accuracy Between the HADS-D and HADS-T**

676 ROC plots comparing sensitivity and specificity estimates for all cutoffs between the
677 HADS-D (0-21) and HADS-T (0-42) among all included studies are shown in Figure 1. A large
678 part of the plots for the HADS-D and HADS-T were overlapping. The HADS-T performed better

679 than HADS-D at some cutoffs, but this pattern was not consistent across cutoffs. The AUCs for
680 the HADS-D and HADS-T were similar among all studies (0.853 versus 0.872). We also
681 compared the ROCs among studies that used a semi-structured reference standard and found a
682 similar pattern (Supplementary Figure B).

683 Based on the pooled sensitivity and specificity across all HADS-D and HADS-T cutoffs,
684 among all studies, the cutoff that minimized the values of the distance to the top-left corner of
685 the ROC curves was ≥ 7 for the HADS-D (sensitivity [95% CI] = 0.79 [0.75, 0.83], specificity
686 [95% CI] = 0.78 [0.75, 0.80]) and ≥ 15 for the HADS-T (sensitivity [95% CI] = 0.79 [0.76,
687 0.82], specificity [95% CI] = 0.81 [0.78, 0.83]) (Table 2).

688 The comparison of sensitivity and specificity between the HADS-D and HADS-T for the
689 optimal cutoffs (HADS-D ≥ 7 vs. HADS-T ≥ 15) and other cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs (\geq
690 5 vs. ≥ 11 ; ≥ 6 vs. ≥ 13 ; ≥ 8 vs. ≥ 17 ; ≥ 9 vs. ≥ 19 ; ≥ 10 vs. ≥ 21 ; and ≥ 11 vs. ≥ 23 are presented
691 in Table 2. Overall, for the pairs of optimal cutoffs or other cutoffs close to the optimal, the
692 differences in sensitivity and specificity between HADS-D and HADS-T using the bootstrapping
693 approach across all 98 primary studies were small. Precision of estimates was high, and the
694 width of 95% CIs ranged from 5% to 9% for sensitivity and 2% to 4% for specificity across all
695 cutoffs examined. For sensitivity, the differences of HADS-T – HADS-D for all pairs of cutoffs
696 were not statistically significant (the differences were between -0.05 and 0.01, CIs were within
697 or overlapped with the range of -0.05 and 0.05). Therefore, at five pairs of optimal cutoffs or
698 other cutoffs close to the optimal, the sensitivity of the HADS-T was equivalent to that of the
699 HADS-D; the equivalency was indeterminate on the other two pairs, based on the pre-specified
700 equivalence margin of $\delta = 0.05$. For specificity, estimates of HADS-T were equivalent to HADS-
701 D for all seven pairs of cutoffs (the differences of HADS-T – HADS-D were between 0.02 and

702 0.03; CIs were all within -0.05 and 0.05). Relevant results among studies that used a semi-
703 structured reference standard were consistent with overall estimates (Supplementary Table D1).

704 The comparison of results via individual-level analysis are presented in Table 3. For each
705 pair of matched HADS-D and HADS-T cutoffs, the differences in sensitivity and specificity
706 between the two tests were similar to those from the bivariate random-effects models. This was
707 also true among studies that used a semi-structured reference standard (Supplementary Table
708 D2).

709 Among participants in inpatient care settings (Table 4a; 8,827 participants from 38
710 studies), the comparison results of HADS-T – HADS-D in sensitivity were similar to the overall
711 estimates; the differences in specificity were slightly larger than overall estimates, however, the
712 95% CIs generally overlapped with -0.05 and 0.05 and were classified as indeterminate to
713 equivalency, with one exception (HADS-D \geq 6 vs. HADS-T \geq 13) for which HADS-T specificity
714 was greater than for the HADS-D. The comparison results among participants in outpatient care
715 settings (Table 4b; 9,547 participants from 54 studies) and participants from studies done in
716 cancer care settings (Supplementary Table E; 5608 participants from 23 studies) were similar to
717 overall estimates. Within the semi-structured reference standard category, similar patterns were
718 found (Supplementary Tables D3 and D4).

719 The meta-regression results indicated no significant differences in sensitivity and
720 specificity were found for any individual participant characteristics or risk of bias ratings
721 (Supplementary Table F1-F3). After adding the country/language variables to the model, the
722 sensitivity and specificity of HADS-D was invariant based on all variables across reference
723 standards except that specificity estimates of the HADS-D were associated with Germany and
724 Spain among studies that used a semi-structured reference standard; specifically, the HADS-D

725 had lower specificity among participants from Germany and Spain compared to studies done
726 with participants from English speaking countries (Supplementary Table G1-G2).

727 Therefore, we conducted subgroup analysis of our comparisons of HADS-D and HADS-T
728 accuracy for participants from Germany or Spain. For each pair of matched HADS-D and
729 HADS-T cutoffs among participants from Germany (Supplementary Table H1), the comparison
730 results of HADS-T – HADS-D in sensitivity and specificity were similar to the overall estimates;
731 among participants from Spain (Supplementary Table H2), differences in specificity were
732 slightly larger than overall estimates, however, the 95% CIs all overlapped with -0.05 and 0.05
733 and were classified as indeterminate to equivalent, and differences in sensitivity were similar to
734 the overall estimates.

735 A forest plot of the differences of sensitivity and specificity estimates for HADS-D ≥ 7 vs.
736 HADS-T ≥ 15 across all studies is shown in Figure 2. At the optimal cutoffs, there was low
737 heterogeneity in the differences between HADS-D and HADS-T across the 98 studies with
738 estimated inter-study heterogeneity (τ^2) < 0.01 for sensitivity and < 0.01 for specificity. The
739 forest plot of the differences of sensitivity and specificity estimates at optimal cutoffs for the
740 HADS-D and HADS-T among studies that used a semi-structured reference standard is shown in
741 Supplementary Figure C.

742 Discussion

743 We assessed the equivalency of screening accuracy of the HADS-D and HADS-T across
744 all cutoffs to detect major depression and compared accuracy across paired optimal cutoffs and
745 other cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs to test whether the HADS-T is superior to HADS-D for
746 major depression detection. There were two main findings. First, among all 98 included studies
747 the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves (Riley et al., 2008) were

748 minimized at a HADS-D cutoff ≥ 7 (sensitivity = 0.79, specificity = 0.78) and at a HADS-T
749 cutoff ≥ 15 (sensitivity = 0.79, specificity = 0.81). Second, at paired optimal cutoffs and six other
750 cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs, the HADS-D was similarly accurate compared to the HADS-
751 T overall and among studies that used a semi-structured reference standard.

752 Overall, for all 98 primary studies, across all sets of paired cutoffs, the sensitivity and
753 specificity of the HADS-T were classified as equivalent to that of the HADS-D based on the pre-
754 specified equivalency margin. Although the HADS-T was slightly more specific (range 0.02 to
755 0.03), all the 95% CIs for differences in sensitivity and specificity of HADS-T – HADS-D were
756 within or overlapped with the range of -0.05 and 0.05. When we analyzed data separately among
757 studies that used a semi-structured reference standard, differences in sensitivity and specificity
758 between the HADS-D and HADS-T were similar to the overall estimates.

759 Furthermore, similar to overall estimates, there were no substantive differences in
760 performance between the HADS-D and HADS-T in detecting major depression among medical
761 outpatients. Among inpatients, the HADS-T and HADS-D were also equivalent in sensitivity.
762 The HADS-T performed slightly better than HADS-D in terms of specificity, and equivalency
763 was indeterminate based on the pre-specified equivalence margin, except for one pair of cutoffs.
764 This finding is possibly related to the greater presence of anxiety symptoms in inpatients versus
765 outpatients and its relationship to depression (Schatzberg, 2019).

766 Previous conventional meta-analyses of results from cancer patients (Mitchell et al.,
767 2010; Vodermaier & Millman, 2011) suggested that the HADS-T may perform better than the
768 HADS-D, but that conclusion was highly uncertain given the limitations of the samples and
769 methods. Through our IPDMA, with its large dataset and more rigorous comparison methods
770 including both bivariate random-effects models and individual-level models, a two-level

771 bootstrap approach (Fagerland et al., 2014; Higgins & Thompson, 2002), and subgroup analysis,
772 we found there was no consistent evidence that the HADS-T is superior to HADS-D for major
773 depression detection, including in cancer care settings. In addition, we did not identify any
774 differences between HADS-D and HADS-T accuracy that were associated with individual
775 participant characteristics or countries. Therefore, in research and clinical general practice, using
776 the full 14-item HADS-T for depression screening would likely result in no to minimal gain in
777 screening accuracy but would add unnecessary burden to patients compared to the 7-item
778 HADS-D.

779 To our knowledge, this is the first meta-analysis that directly compared the HADS-D and
780 HADS-T for screening for depression using the same large individual participant dataset for both
781 screening tools. Strengths of this study included the large overall sample size and high precision
782 of estimates of differences, the ability to compare results for HADS-D and HADS-T across all
783 cutoffs from all studies, and the ability to assess screening accuracy overall and by inpatient and
784 outpatient subgroups. There are also limitations to consider. First, for the full IPDMA data,
785 primary data from 72 of 165 published eligible datasets (44% of datasets, 34% of participants)
786 were not included, and only those datasets with complete data for all individual HADS item
787 scores (91% of available data) were included in this study. Nonetheless, this sample was much
788 larger than the few primary studies that have previously compared the HADS-D and HADS-T.
789 Second, we did not conduct analyses restricted to studies with “low” risk of bias ratings across
790 QUADAS-2 domains. However, in sensitivity analysis in this study and in our main IPDMA on
791 the HADS-D (Wu, et al., 2021), risk of bias ratings were not associated with screening accuracy.
792 Third, the present study used a subset of studies and participants from our previously conducted
793 HADS-D IPDMA (Wu, et al., 2021). This IPDMA project was designed to assess the accuracy

794 of the HADS-D for detecting major depression. Diagnoses of other mental disorders, including,
795 anxiety disorders, were not collected in most of the included primary studies. Thus, we were not
796 able to evaluate the sensitivity and specificity of the HADS-D, HADS-Anxiety, or HADS-T for
797 detecting mental disorders generally. Forth, we did not record inter-rated reliability for risk of
798 bias ratings; however, all ratings were done by trained reviewers and any disagreements were
799 addressed by consensus, including a third investigator as necessary.

800 **Conclusions**

801 In summary, this study found that sensitivity and specificity of the HADS-T were not
802 superior to the HADS-D for detecting major depression in a large individual participant dataset.
803 Using the 7-item HADS-D for depression screening instead of the full 14-item HADS-T has
804 minimal influence on performance of the measure but would reduce patient and participant
805 burden in clinical and research settings. Both HADS-D and HADS-T have only modest
806 screening ability and discussion of their exact indications for use and related caveats are beyond
807 the scope of this article. However, there were no substantive differences in performance between
808 the HADS-D and HADS-T in detecting major depression among medical outpatients, although
809 there was a slight advantage in specificity of indeterminate equivalency for the HADS-T among
810 medical inpatients, for whom adding the anxiety items of HADS-A may improve accuracy.

811

812 **Ethical Approval:** As this study involved secondary analysis of anonymized previously
813 collected data, the Research Ethics Committee of the Jewish General Hospital declared that this
814 project did not require research ethics approval. However, for each included dataset, we
815 confirmed that the original study received ethics approval and that all patients provided informed
816 consent.

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1315 *Studies that included in the IPDMA

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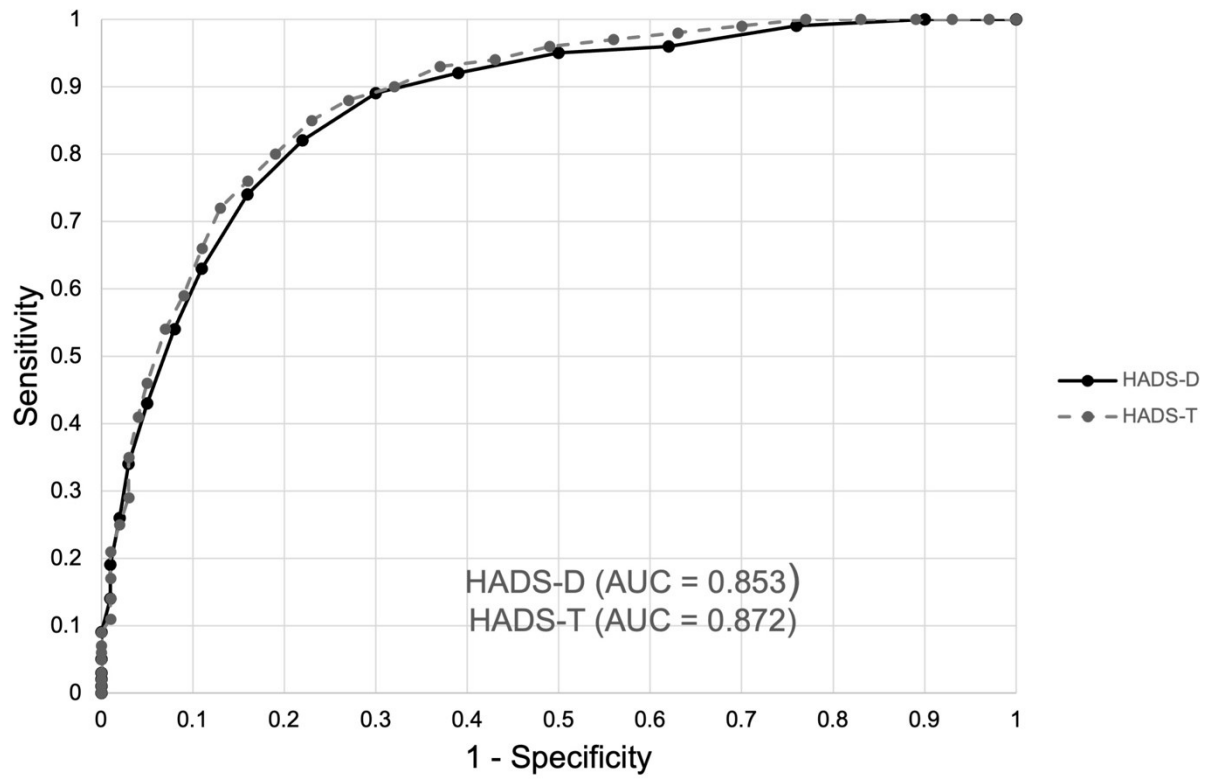


Fig 1. ROC curve for HADS-D and HADS-T across all studies.

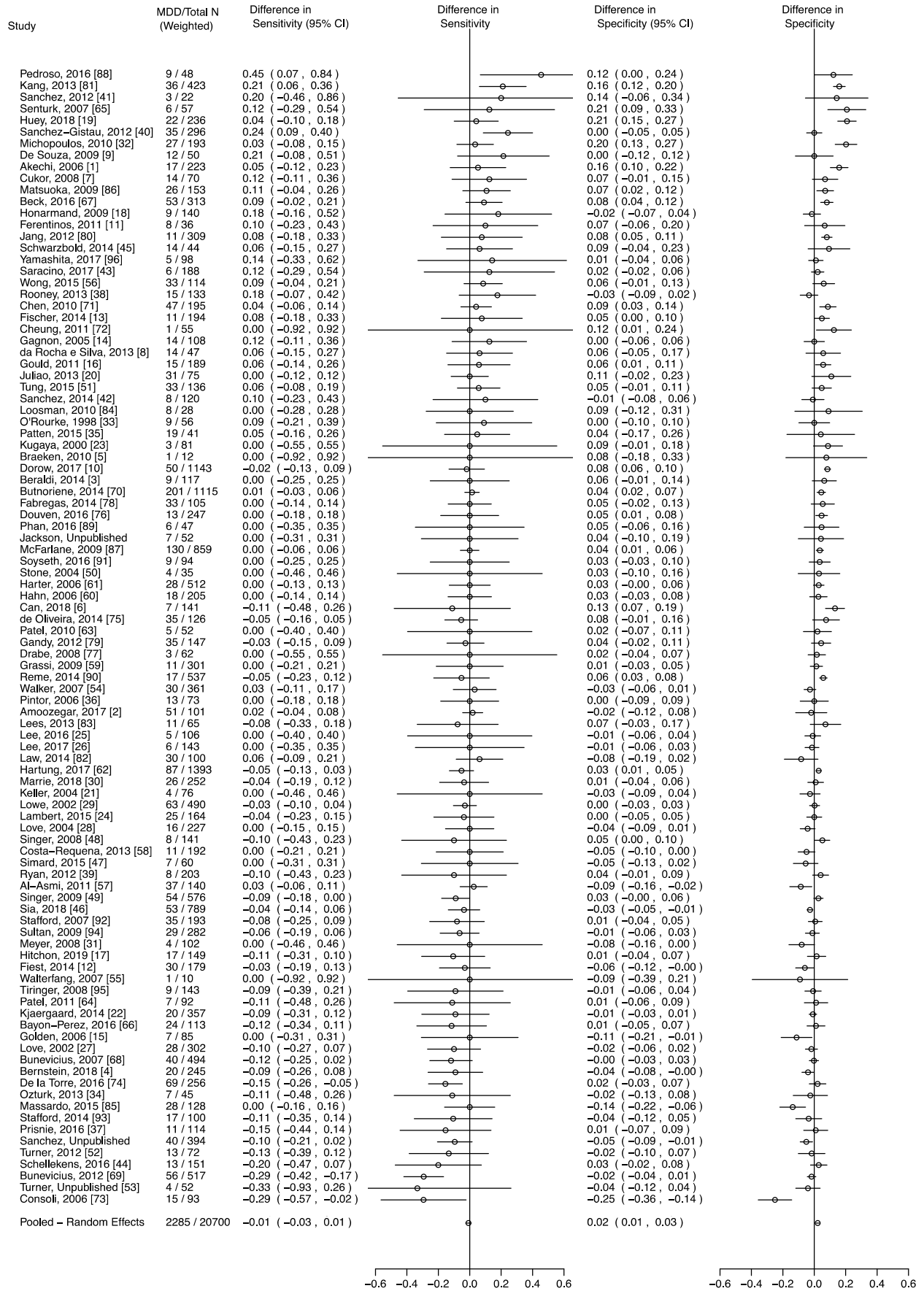


Fig 2. Forest plots of the difference in sensitivity and specificity estimates at the optimal cutoff (HADS-D: ≥ 7 ; HADS-T: ≥ 15) between HADS-D and HADS-T across all studies^a (N Studies = 98^b; N Participants = 20,700; N major depression = 2,285)^c

^a τ^2 for the difference of sensitivity and specificity were both < 0.001 .

^b References for all included studies are marked with an asterisk in the reference list. The reference numbers refer to Supplementary Material References.

^c The studies were sorted by the sum of difference in sensitivity and difference in specificity in descending order.

Table 1. Participant data by subgroups^a

Participant Subgroup	N Studies	N Participants	N (%) Major Depression
All participants	98	20,700	2,285 (11)
Participants not currently diagnosed with a mental disorder or receiving treatment for a mental health problem	38	6,995	495 (7)
Age <60	92	11,795	1,452 (12)
Age ≥60	92	8,741	779 (9)
Women	96	11,111	1,342 (12)
Men	89	9,494	911 (10)
Very high country human development index	90	20,088	2,130 (11)
High country human development index	8	612	155 (25)
Participants diagnosed with cancer^b	27	5,767	433 (8)
Inpatient specialty care	38	8,827	1,047 (12)
Outpatient specialty care	54	9,547	1,072 (11)
Non-medical	7	1,908	116 (6)
Inpatient/outpatient mixed	3	418	50 (12)

^a Some variables were coded at the study level, while others were coded at the participant level. Thus, number of studies does not always add up to the total number.

^b The statistics here were from individual-level variable of cancer diagnosis, slight different from what we used in the subgroup analysis which based on the study-level care setting variable.

Table 2. Comparison of sensitivity and specificity estimates between HADS-D and HADS-T for pairs of optimal cutoffs and cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs across all studies

HADS-D ^a					HADS-T					HADS-T – HADS-D			
Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI
5	0.90	(0.87, 0.92)	0.61	(0.58, 0.64)	11	0.91	(0.89, 0.93)	0.63	(0.60, 0.66)	0.01	(-0.01, 0.04)	0.02	(-0.00, 0.04)
6	0.86	(0.82, 0.88)	0.70	(0.67, 0.73)	13	0.86	(0.83, 0.88)	0.73	(0.70, 0.75)	0.00	(-0.03, 0.03)	0.03	(0.01, 0.05)
7 ^b	0.79	(0.75, 0.83)	0.78	(0.75, 0.80)	15 ^c	0.79	(0.76, 0.82)	0.81	(0.78, 0.83)	0.00	(-0.05, 0.02)	0.03	(0.01, 0.04)
8	0.70	(0.66, 0.74)	0.84	(0.82, 0.86)	17	0.70	(0.66, 0.74)	0.87	(0.85, 0.89)	0.00	(-0.05, 0.04)	0.03	(0.01, 0.04)
9	0.60	(0.55, 0.64)	0.89	(0.87, 0.91)	19	0.58	(0.54, 0.61)	0.91	(0.9, 0.93)	-0.02	(-0.07, 0.02)	0.02	(0.01, 0.03)
10	0.50	(0.45, 0.54)	0.92	(0.91, 0.94)	21	0.45	(0.41, 0.49)	0.95	(0.94, 0.95)	-0.05	(-0.10, -0.01)	0.03	(0.01, 0.03)
11	0.39	(0.35, 0.43)	0.95	(0.94, 0.96)	23	0.34	(0.31, 0.37)	0.97	(0.96, 0.97)	-0.05	(-0.10, -0.01)	0.02	(0.01, 0.03)

^a N Studies = 98; N Participants = 20,700; N major depression = 2,285

^b The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-D.

^c The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-T.

CI: confidence interval

Table 3. Comparison of sensitivity and specificity estimates between HADS-D and HADS-T for pairs of optimal cutoffs and cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs across all studies via individual-level model

HADS-D^a	HADS-T	HADS-T – HADS-D	
Cutoff	Cutoff	Sensitivity	Specificity
5	11	0.02 (-0.00, 0.03)	0.01 (-0.00, 0.03)
6	13	0.01 (-0.01, 0.03)	0.03 (0.01, 0.04)
7 ^b	15 ^c	0.00 (-0.02, 0.03)	0.02 (0.01, 0.04)
8	17	0.00 (-0.03, 0.03)	0.03 (0.02, 0.04)
9	19	-0.02 (-0.05, 0.01)	0.03 (0.02, 0.04)
10	21	-0.05 (-0.08, -0.02)	0.03 (0.02, 0.03)
11	23	-0.05 (-0.09, -0.02)	0.02 (0.02, 0.03)

^a N Participants = 20,700; N major depression = 2,285

^b The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-D.

^c The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-T.

Table 4a. Comparison of sensitivity and specificity estimates between HADS-D and HADS-T for pairs of optimal cutoffs and cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs among participants recruited from inpatient care settings

HADS-D ^a					HADS-T					HADS-T – HADS-D			
Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI
5	0.90	(0.87, 0.93)	0.55	(0.49, 0.60)	11	0.90	(0.87, 0.92)	0.62	(0.56, 0.68)	0.00	(-0.03, 0.03)	0.07	(0.04, 0.11)
6	0.86	(0.83, 0.89)	0.64	(0.58, 0.69)	13	0.85	(0.81, 0.88)	0.72	(0.67, 0.77)	-0.01	(-0.07, 0.02)	0.08	(0.06, 0.12)
7 ^b	0.80	(0.75, 0.83)	0.73	(0.68, 0.78)	15 ^{cd}	0.79	(0.74, 0.82)	0.81	(0.76, 0.85)	-0.01	(-0.08, 0.02)	0.08	(0.05, 0.11)
8	0.73	(0.68, 0.78)	0.80	(0.76, 0.84)	17	0.69	(0.64, 0.74)	0.87	(0.83, 0.9)	-0.04	(-0.11, 0.03)	0.07	(0.04, 0.09)
9	0.63	(0.58, 0.69)	0.86	(0.82, 0.89)	19	0.59	(0.54, 0.64)	0.91	(0.88, 0.93)	-0.04	(-0.14, 0.01)	0.05	(0.03, 0.07)
10	0.55	(0.49, 0.61)	0.90	(0.87, 0.93)	21	0.46	(0.41, 0.51)	0.95	(0.92, 0.96)	-0.09	(-0.19, -0.03)	0.05	(0.03, 0.06)
11	0.45	(0.39, 0.51)	0.93	(0.91, 0.95)	23	0.36	(0.32, 0.41)	0.97	(0.95, 0.98)	-0.09	(-0.18, -0.02)	0.04	(0.02, 0.05)

^a N Studies = 38; N Participants = 8,827; N major depression = 1,047

^b The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-D.

^c The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-T.

^d On this cutoff of HADS-T, the model convergence code was 0 when using the default optimizer in glmer, but there were meaningful CIs.

CI: confidence interval

Table 4b. Comparison of sensitivity and specificity estimates between HADS-D and HADS-T for pairs of optimal cutoffs and cutoffs close to the optimal cutoffs among participants recruited from outpatient care settings

HADS-D ^a					HADS-T					HADS-T – HADS-D			
Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Cutoff	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI	Sensitivity	95% CI	Specificity	95% CI
5	0.91	(0.87, 0.94)	0.63	(0.60, 0.67)	11	0.92	(0.89, 0.95)	0.62	(0.59, 0.66)	0.01	(-0.02, 0.04)	-0.01	(-0.03, 0.01)
6	0.87	(0.82, 0.91)	0.72	(0.69, 0.75)	13	0.88	(0.84, 0.91)	0.72	(0.69, 0.75)	0.01	(-0.02, 0.05)	0.00	(-0.01, 0.02)
7 ^b	0.82	(0.75, 0.86)	0.79	(0.76, 0.81)	15 ^c	0.81	(0.76, 0.84)	0.80	(0.77, 0.82)	-0.01	(-0.07, 0.04)	0.01	(-0.01, 0.03)
8	0.71	(0.65, 0.77)	0.85	(0.83, 0.87)	17	0.73	(0.67, 0.78)	0.86	(0.84, 0.88)	0.02	(-0.04, 0.07)	0.01	(-0.00, 0.03)
9	0.60	(0.54, 0.66)	0.90	(0.88, 0.91)	19	0.59	(0.53, 0.65)	0.91	(0.90, 0.92)	-0.01	(-0.08, 0.04)	0.01	(0.00, 0.03)
10	0.49	(0.43, 0.55)	0.93	(0.91, 0.94)	21	0.45	(0.39, 0.52)	0.94	(0.93, 0.95)	-0.04	(-0.11, 0.02)	0.01	(0.00, 0.03)
11	0.38	(0.32, 0.44)	0.95	(0.94, 0.96)	23	0.34	(0.29, 0.39)	0.96	(0.95, 0.97)	-0.04	(-0.10, 0.01)	0.01	(0.00, 0.02)

^a N Studies = 54; N Participants = 9,547; N major depression = 1,072

^b The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-D.

^c The cutoff minimizes the values of the distance to the top-left corner of the ROC curves for HADS-T.

CI: confidence interval