Video transcript: A Simple Introduction to Outcome Measures

What are Outcome Measures?

Outcome Measures provide healthcare professionals with information that supports them to assess and monitor changes in the wellbeing of their patients.

These measures are not disease or procedure specific. Instead, they are short questionnaires which provide the ‘headlines’ about a person’s health and wellbeing, and what they are able to do.

Why do we need them?

The Outcome Measures address the individual symptoms and concerns (and ability and function) of each patient. They enable professionals to collect useful information, develop a “common language” with patients and team colleagues, and plan care in the most appropriate way which is unique for each individual person. The measures can be used to support good communication, and monitor symptoms, treatment, and changes over time.

They are not intended to represent all of the care delivered to each patient – but they provide a summary, or the ‘headlines’, about what is happening.

Sometimes they demonstrate a positive improvement in symptoms, but at other times, the impact of symptoms is lessened or prevented from worsening.

How and where are they used?

They can be used routinely in Palliative Care - whatever the care setting. We are used to healthcare staff taking "observations" (such as temperature, pulse, blood pressure) during an episode of care.

In Palliative Care, these observations are less useful. It is better to hear about symptoms and other concerns. This is more useful information and can be a good basis for shared decisions.

How can outcome measures help me to support my patients?

Using outcome measures helps to promote shared understanding during discussions with patients and their families or carers, particularly when dealing with individual symptoms and concerns.

The measures are person-centred, developed from the most common symptoms and concerns that people with advanced illness report. They also encourage shared decision making at each stage of an assessment, empowering patients, their families, and carers to participate in the delivery of care.

Do Outcome Measures work?

All the measures we recommend are valid, meaning they work well, and are reliable, meaning they behave consistently. Professionals can depend on them to record the patient's symptoms, concerns, and functional ability in an accurate and consistent way.

What are the different ways in which Outcome Measures information or data can be used?

With the patient, to talk about their main symptoms or concerns, and for planning actions together.

Screening for further assessment, or using alerts if scores are high. For example, a score of 2, 3 or 4 for the item on depressed mood in the Integrated Palliative care Outcome Scale should lead to detailed assessment of mood.

Helping the team to plan caseloads, review cases, and share information across the multi-disciplinary team and with other teams.

To inform the provision of palliative care services, for quality improvement, to improve services, to deliver business cases, and provide evidence for annual and other reports.

If teams collect and use these Outcome Measures consistently, then we can share outcomes data locally, nationally, and even internationally, to improve care and ensure excellent standards.

Where can I learn more?

Further training resources are available through the research pages of the Hull York Medical School website at hyms.ac.uk/resolve-training