Palliative Care Problem Severity Score (PCPSS)

Palliative Care Problem Severity Score (PCPSS) is a screening tool used to measure the severity of physical and psychological problems. The PCPSS has four domains: The first three are patient specific. The fourth domain measures family/carer problems associated with the patient’s condition or palliative care needs. The score triggers a more in-depth assessment.

The PCPSS domains
- Pain
- Other symptoms
- Psychological/spiritual
- Family/carer

The PCPSS scale
- 0 Absent
- 1 Mild
- 2 Moderate
- 3 Severe

The problem severity score measures the severity of palliative care problems

How to assess PCPSS
1. Score the overall severity of the problems experienced on admission or at episode start.
2. Assess routinely. A minimum of daily in an inpatient setting, at each visit in a community setting or each consult.
3. Assess whenever there is a phase change and at episode end if discharged.
4. Assessment may be conducted face to face or over the phone.
5. Record the score as assessed.

Examples of questions
“What is the overall severity of problems relating to pain experienced by this patient?”

“Is the patient experiencing symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhoea, dyspnoea, incontinence, irritation, wounds, confusion, delirium, oedema, weakness, fatigue, anorexia? If so, what is the overall severity of the symptom or combined symptoms?”

“Is the patient experiencing psychological/spiritual problems such as agitation, anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, unrealistic goals, request to die, confusion, depression?”

“What is the severity of problems relating to the family or carer such as denial, caregiver fatigue, unrealistic goals, anger, cultural issues, communication, family/carer anxiety?”

For further information, please refer to the PCPSS PowerPoint presentation located on your PCOC USB flash drive or go to www.pcoc.org.au

References for PCPSS: