Recent Findings: The Dementia Outcomes Measurement Suite Project

Abstract:
This paper provides an overview of recent work undertaken to develop an outcome measurement suite for people with dementia. The aim was to review all the published instruments used for the assessment, diagnosis, screening and outcomes monitoring/evaluation of people with dementia; in order to recommend a set of psychometrically valid measures for clinicians and researchers to use, across a range of different practice settings.

Based on previous work in developing a Continence Outcomes Measurement Suite (Thomas et al, 2006), the analysis combines clinical and academic sources of knowledge in order to produce realistic and useful recommendations. Specifically the approach combines psychometric evidence, with a review of the academic literature for impact, and consultation with clinical experts in the field about the suitability of instruments.

The instrument categories reviewed included: global dementia assessments, associated behavioural symptoms, cognition, function, social isolation, health-related quality of life, multi-attribute utility measures, and patient and carer satisfaction with treatment. Five top instruments in each category were selected for detailed review and judgment based on the following criteria: availability of instrument, psychometric evidence of reliability and validity, availability of normative and clinical reference data, instrument length, administration time and burden, ease of scoring, ability to be used with the various severity levels of dementia, cost considerations, and the applicability for routine care.

This detailed review and consultation process resulted in a number of measures being recommended for routine use with dementia patients. Additional issues were addressed including the use of proxy (informant) measurement and the application to cultural and linguistically diverse populations. A number of areas for further research were also identified.

By developing a set of recommended measures it is hoped to standardize the screening, assessment and evaluation tools used in this field to enhance the comparability of findings across research and practice settings.