Implementing a Systematic Approach to Rating Scale Selection – Our Lessons Learned

Abstract:
Public Health Services are reliant on complex funding systems based on need and clearly demonstrated health outcomes. However, choosing rating scales that can demonstrate outcomes for multifaceted and diverse services such as Occupational Therapy is complex. While there are published guidelines for developing and evaluating rating scales, there is no clear guidance on selecting scales for clinical practice.

In order to progress, we have guided Clinicians to apply a logical systematic process for selecting rating scales relevant to their clinical services. This process involves four phases:

- Conceptually defining what they do and what changes for their patients as a result of what they do.
- Systematically selecting scales that conceptually fit with these definitions.
- Verifying that the content and items of these scales conceptually match with their definitions.
- Systematically evaluating the relevance and utility of these scales in relation to their psychometric properties with their particular patient population.

We will specifically outline the systematic process our Clinicians have employed to guide them in selecting rating scales for their particular clinical area. This process will be illustrated with cogent examples and endorsed with preliminary data collected. We will also discuss the lessons we have learnt about measuring complex clinical outcomes by applying this level of rigour to rating scale selection.

Key Words: Occupational Therapy; public Health; clinical evaluation; outcome measure strategy; rating scales