Aim: To use routinely collected outcome data to analyse which aspects of mental health related functioning are most sensitive to change during inpatient mental health care.

Method: The National Outcomes and Casemix Collection (NOCC) has seen the introduction into routine clinical practice across Australia of a suite of standard measures. The primary measure of problem severity in older person’s services is the Health of the Nation Outcomes Scales (HoNOS) 65+. It consists of 12 items that cover the sorts of problems that may be experienced by people with a significant mental illness. The clinician rates the consumer on each of the 12 items using a five point scale, ranging from 0 to 4 where 0 indicated ‘No Problem’ and 4 ‘Severe to Very Severe Problem’. A rating score of 2 or more indicates a clinically significant problem. This paper will explore the difference in clinically significant ratings on these items from admission to discharge from care in mental health units for older people.

Results: Across consumers from the three major diagnostic groups; organic disorders, psychotic disorders and mood (including Bipolar) disorders, there are distinct differences in profiles of impairment at admission and discharge. An overview will be presented of these profiles, and then areas of particular interest discussed in further detail. For example inpatients with mood disorders have clinically significant ratings for depression on the HoNOS 65+ item of 75% at admission and 35% at discharge; whilst the respective rates for patients with psychotic disorders are 33% and 10%. Inpatients with organic disorders have clinically significant ratings for impaired Activity of Daily Living functioning of 75% at admission and 70% at discharge; whilst the respective rates for inpatients with mood disorders are 50% and 25%.

Discussion: Whilst routinely collected data does not have the same rigor applied to rating accuracy as specific research data, on initial review the differences in HoNOS65+ profiles between diagnostic groups appear consistent with clinical expectations. Comparison of the HoNOS65+ item score profiles at admission and discharge from inpatient mental health care therefore appear to provide valuable information to improve the understanding of the nature of problems managed by mental health services for older people, and the effect of inpatient care upon these.