



Information and the National Mental Health Strategy 2003 to 2008

A major objective of the National Mental Health Strategy is the continued improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the treatment of people with a mental illness. This objective is dependent upon quality information being available to guide decisions at all levels of the mental health system. However, information development in mental health services has lagged behind mainstream health services. The National Mental Health Strategy 2003 to 2008 outlines a continued commitment to the comprehensive implementation and further development of routine consumer outcome measurement along with the continued development of casemix classification in Australian mental health services.

The plan also outlines a commitment to the development of a national strategy in collaboration between the Australian Government, States and Territories for database development, data analysis, dissemination and training.

Outcome and Casemix Measurement

The vision of the introduction of outcomes and casemix measurement is the creation of publicly funded and managed mental health services where the routine use of consumer and clinician rated outcome measures contribute to improved clinical practice as well as service management and development.

This information will be used to create an informed mental health sector in which benchmarking is the norm, where every service has access to regular reports on their performance relative to similar services and this information is used to inform quality improvement activities.

This information creates a mental health sector that has the capacity for the informed use of casemix information to understand the role of provider variation in differences between agencies in value for money, outcomes and quality and that the collection and use of this information will develop a culture of mental health service evaluation and research that contributes knowledge and evidence to inform best clinical practice.

The Australian Mental Health Outcomes and Classification Network

The Australian Mental Health Outcomes and Classification Network (**AMHOCN**) has been created to provide leadership to the mental health sector to support the sustainable implementation of outcome and casemix collection.

How AMHOCN will work

AMHOCN is a resource to support States and Territories and will work collaboratively with the mental health sector to achieve the vision of the introduction of outcomes and casemix measures to mental health services. AMHOCN has a commitment to transparent operation with the aim of sharing information to improve outcomes for all stakeholders in mental health.

The AMHOCN Components

AMHOCN is comprised of three components:

Data Bureau

The Data Bureau component is responsible for receiving and processing the mental health outcomes and casemix data submitted by States and Territories. This function is being undertaken by Strategic Data, a Victorian company

with expertise in the establishment and management of large data sets. Strategic Data will work with States and Territories to identify and resolve data quality issues, build data sets for analysis and reporting purposes and return episode based data sets to States and Territories for local analysis.

Analysis and Reporting

The Analysis and Reporting component is responsible for the ongoing development of mental health outcomes and casemix information at a National level while also providing a resource for such work at a State and Territory level. This function will be undertaken by The University of Queensland, primarily through the work of Prof Philip Burgess and A/Prof Jane Pirkis from The University of Melbourne. The Analysis and Reporting component will focus on the development of reports that can be used for benchmarking purposes. Reports will be developed that provide normative or reference data that will allow the interpretation of outcomes. This component will also undertake analysis that looks at the performance of individual measures and informs the further development of outcomes and casemix measurement in mental health.

Training and Service Development

This will be a resource centre for the ongoing training and use of outcomes and casemix

measures in mental health. This component will also support benchmarking activities. These functions will be undertaken by The New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry, primarily through the work of Mr Tim Coombs and Dr Louise Newman. This component will develop training materials that support States and Territories in training and retraining staff in the measures which underpin the outcomes and casemix collection. It will also develop materials which increase the use of these measures to inform individual clinical practice and service quality improvement activities.

AMHOCN development so far

Expressions of interest for AMHOCN were called in November 2002. The first project management meeting was held in December 2003. The first meeting of the Information Strategy Committee's AMHOCN Reference Group was held in March 2004.

Since then, AMHOCN has consulted extensively with over 120 clinicians, managers and others across all states and territories. This consultation process aimed to identify the progress of implementation, issues around data flows and data linkage, current and future analysis and reporting plans and current and future training and development plans. The results of this consultation process have informed the development of

the AMHOCN workplan for 2004 – 2005.

Website

AMHOCN is host to the National Outcomes and Casemix Collection Website (mhnocc.org) This website provides information on the National Outcomes and Casemix Collection (NOCC) as well as links to other outcome and casemix related materials.

The website also hosts an online forum that provides mental health staff across Australia with an opportunity to raise issues and discuss outcomes and casemix collection in mental health - everything from the measures used, the data collection protocol, training, data analysis and reporting.

To gain access to the forum all you have to do is register.

1. Select forum on the website homepage,
2. Select register on the forums page,
3. Agree to the conditions of use,
4. Provide a username and password along with your email address,
5. Enter the code provided and you will be sent an email asking you to confirm registration,
6. Reply to this and you're registered.

You can now participate in the forum.