



This year the Australian Mental Health Outcomes and Classification Network in conjunction with the New Zealand Mental Health Research and Development Strategy is sponsoring a major Mental Health Stream at the **11th Health Outcomes Conference 2005: Making a Difference**, to be held in Canberra from the 17th to 18th of August the conference will showcase some of the ongoing developments in routine mental health outcome measurement. More information on the conference including a call for papers is available at www.mhnooc.org. In this newsletter we look at some of the highlights from last years conference.

Professor Graham Mellsop, gave a presentation entitled **“Silk purse from sow’s ears: Gains in effectiveness and efficiency from using imperfect outcome measures”**. In this presentation he identified that, in all probability there will never be a perfect instrument for measuring change in mental health service users. However as a result of the experienced gained from the New Zealand Mental Health Classification and Outcomes Study (CAOS) project and the ability to compare service models in

the light of casemix, the HoNOS and later other measures will be introduced into clinical practice to support a range of quality improvement activities in New Zealand. There may be no perfect measure, but Professor Mellsop indicated that there is a tremendous opportunity for service improvements with the imperfect measures we have.

Dr Robert Brooks presented on the **“Factor Structure and Interpretation of the K-10”**. The Kessler (K) – 10 is the consumer self report measure currently being used in New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. It is a brief, ten item questionnaire which was designed to measure the level of distress associated with psychological symptoms in population surveys. Using information from the Northern Rivers Mental Health Survey, Dr Books has identified a four factor structure to the K-10, identifying that the questionnaire measures four dimensions which include Anxiety, Depressed Mood, fatigue and Motor agitation. Dr Brooks believes that understanding these dimensions give the instrument greater clinical utility.

Mr Ron Catanzaro and Mr Jarod Hamilton presented a paper on **“Calculating and presenting mental health Outcomes change scores”**. This presentation focused on the challenges of calculating and presenting change scores. One of the most significant challenges confronting the calculation and presentation of information is missing data collection and missing items.



From left to right. Mr Ron Catanzaro (NSW), Jarod Hamilton (NSW), Tom Trauer (VIC), Michelle Hudoba (NSW) and Jennifer Wildgoose (NSW)

Ron and Jarod indicated that aggregated change scores may need to be presented in an atypical format for the benefit of service intervention to become apparent and to understand treatment failures, because typical summary scores such as measures of central tendency can obscure improvements when balanced by cases of no improvement or deterioration. The presentation included a variety of different reporting

formats including the very well received “**Bubble Graph**”. Finally, Ron and Jarod called for more focused analyses of change which take into account casemix and demographic factors, allowing services to determine which consumers failed to improve and why.

Ron also gave a presentation on **Clinician rated and Consumer rated self report measures** in this presentation, Ron examined the degree of concordance between clinician rated and consumer self report measures, in particular, the HoNOS and K-10. Examining those collection occasions at which both clinician and consumer measures were completed, Ron examined the concordance between ratings and the degree of concordance in change scores between two collection occasions. Ron identified that there was a low correlation between HoNOS total score and overall psychological distress as measured by the K-10. For Ron, these results highlight the need for multiple perspectives in the collection of consumer information.

Tim Coombs and Michelle Hudoba gave a presentation entitled “ **Comparing Mental health Units Using the Health of the Nation Outcomes Scales – The Illawarra Experience**”. This presentation focused on the development of a workshop designed for service managers to explore the clinical and management utility of the outcomes and casemix measures introduced

into clinical practice. Managers had the opportunity to identify how these measures can be used to support care planning and monitor changes in the health status of consumers. It also gave managers the opportunity to explore the use of these measures to better describe the acuity of the consumers of their services and compare the efficiency and effectiveness of different service units. Managers were particularly interested in how these measures can be used to identify variation in clinicians’ workloads and can be used to inform service development activities. The presentation also highlighted some of the difficulties associated with the use of local information with missing items and collection occasions. The presentation also highlighted the need for consistency in approaches to reporting information between the published literature and service reports to enable easier comparisons.



The South Australians from Left to Right, Bill Miliotis, Haroon Dusmohammed, Helen Sproule, Cheryl Lambert and Caroline Wales

A poster presentation by Helen Sproule the South Australian National Outcomes and Casemix Collection Coordinator entitled “**Building Capacity in South**

Australia – An innovative approach to sustainable outcomes training in mental health services”, was an opportunity for South Australia to display its innovative approach to ensuring that NOCC trainers not only have adequate content knowledge of the data collection protocol and the standard measures but also have the skills to train others. That is why South Australia provided all NOCC trainers with 10 days of training. 3 days training focused on NOCC, the background, rationale and data collection protocol as well as the standard measures of outcomes and casemix. An additional 7 days of training focused on the development of training skills. This training enabled participants to fulfill all criteria and demonstrate all the competencies required for the conferral of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, a qualification nationally recognized by the Australian National Training Authority. Well done South Australia! However, Helen indicated that they are not resting on the laurels. An evaluation of this training indicated participants would have liked more information, access, and training in information technology. Given this, more work will be undertaken to improve these aspects of information literacy within the workforce.

Newsletter compiled by Tim Coombs