



## Case Study - October 2010 Experience & Outcomes in Podiatry

### Outcomes have become a high profile issue for healthcare providers with the new NHS Outcomes Framework moving emphasis away from measuring activity and towards the outcomes of patients in terms of effective treatments and good experience.

Spurred on by the drip-feed publication of early results from the Department of Health's national PROMS programme for Hip & Knee replacement, interest in measuring outcomes grows amongst clinicians.

Some professions have been slower to recognise the overriding importance of patient reported outcomes measures (PROMS) as opposed to clinician rated measurement. While such reticence is an understandable fear by some clinicians that patients are "unable" to understand the clinical value of the treatment, more enlightened recognise that patient understanding of the complexities is irrelevant - "if patients feel better, they are better."

#### The mystery of PROMS

PROMS have a legacy reputation from their pharmaceutical research origins, of being complex to administer and interpret. In this case study, we can see that this is not the case, and routine measurement of outcomes can easily be achieved by mainstream clinical services.

#### Experience measurement

Standardisation of experience measures has not attracted the same interest however. Many healthcare providers aim to measure experience, but in the form of local satisfaction questions randomly asked through sampling. This superficial measurement has been fuelled by a lack of understanding of the meaning of "Near Real Time", assuming that this must mean patients using electronic devices to report how "good" aspects of their care are at every opportunity of their stay.

Those who have gone down this route find that the results are less useful than they anticipated with very low, skewed coverage and limited results. Nothing is known about the patient, there is poor anchoring to the relevant service and census point and there is significant staff time involved in managing devices and directing patients.

#### A fully managed approach

When the Podiatry Service of South Birmingham Community Healthcare needed to carry out their routine annual survey, they chose to use the COM-Q service provided by CoMetrica. Mandy Cadge, Podiatry Services Manager, needed to fulfil the Trust's annual experience measurement programme, but wanted to go much further and include clinical outcomes for the first time.

#### Measurement Aims

The service had carried out their own experience surveys before but recognised these were skewed and wanted something more comprehensive and inclusive. The aims were:

- To measure the experience & satisfaction of the Podiatry service patients by clinic and patient type
- To measure clinical outcomes of the treatment, as perceived by patients in addition to their experience.
- To achieve a more detailed measurement capable of "drill down" of results to a more detailed level, for example by patient age, geography, treatment provided etc.
- To enable comprehensive representative coverage with minimal effort
- To provide a channel for patients comments and results to be seen on a continuous basis rather than having to have an analysis process and subsequent report write-up

#### Survey Scope

500 new referrals over an 8 week period in June/ July 2010 were included. This covered all patients and clinics with the exception of some very small throughput areas.

#### Census Points

Following consultation with CoMetrica, the department chose to measure the "first impressions" experience of newly referred patients and take a baseline EQ5D general health status score and an FHS foot health score.

A second census point was to be 60 days after a new referral to assess the immediate impact of the patient's podiatry treatment.

A third census point was the discharge of any patients during the survey period.

The CoMetrica service included access to standardised PROM and experience measures so little work was required in selecting the questions to be used.

#### How the service works

The COM-Q service works on a continuous daily basis triggered by secure data from the Trusts information service. This triggered the creation of personalised electronic questionnaires for every new referral and patients who had been new referrals 60 days previously or had been discharged. CoMetrica handled all the printing & postage so patients received the questionnaire within a couple of days of their referral being recorded on the Trusts administration system.

A personalised cover letter included the relevant appointment details to anchor the patients recollection and patients were invited to respond on-line via a secure internet connection, or complete the included paper questionnaire returning it in the supplied pre-paid first class envelope.

In 2010 South Birmingham Community Healthcare Podiatry Service chose the COM-Q service provided by CoMetrica to measure the experience and outcomes of their patients. The project aimed to reach all patients rather than a sample and provide more comprehensive results than could be achieved by other means.

Mandy Cadge, Podiatry Services Manager, chose the COM-Q service for the following reasons:

- Comprehensive cover of all patients rather than a sample
- No extra work for staff
- Flexible, dynamic question content linked to groups of patients if required
- Continuous measurement with quantitative & qualitative results coming back daily
- Results linked to patient data

#### Results

The service could see patient comments and quantitative results coming back within a week of going live and these were checked daily. Overall, the measures quantified a gain in foot health and general health as a result of treatment, with good experience scores across almost all aspects of the service.

#### Measures used at each census point

New referral (in clinic)	New referral (In Patients home)	60 days after new referral	On Discharge
EQ5D	EQ5D	EQ5D	EQ5D
Foot Health Score	Foot Health Score	Foot Health Score	Foot Health Score
Communication	Communication		
Clinic access, Environment, facilities			
Perceived clinical competency	Perceived clinical competency		
Overall care & concern	Overall care & concern	Overall care & concern	Overall care & concern



97% of patients chose the paper route and most returned their questionnaires within a few days to CoMetrica's reading centre where they were immediately read into the COM-Q system so that the podiatry service could see results and comments coming back on a daily basis.

## High response rates

Over 50% of patients responded (273) and since all patients had been included, no follow-up letters or telephone phone calls were required. The response rates were high across all age bands, clinics and postcode sectors so the measurements had achieved the aim of being highly representative.

## Outcome Scores

	Scale	At start	After 60 days	Discharge
Responses	n	127 (51%)	121 (50%)	23 (50%)
Generic PROM EQ5D	0= feel like "death" 1= perfect health	0.55	0.63	0.56
Foot health PROM - FHS	0= maximum pain, 1=no pain, restriction	0.52	0.57	0.59
Communication	0% = "poorest" 100% = "best possible"	90%		
Environment, access, facilities	0% = "poorest" 100% = "best possible"	86%		
Clinical competency	0% = "poorest" 100% = "best possible"	88%		
Overall satisfaction	0% = "poorest" 100% = "best possible"	95%	87%	85%

## Patient Experience Scores

Composite scores for 4 key aspects of experience showed high degrees of satisfaction for new referrals. Overall care & concerns was also measured after 60 days or discharge and a slight reduction in satisfaction was seen. This was considered to be related to the discharge of patients who were low-priority. More detailed results were available by clinic, staff, location and by the individual experience questions. Overall the findings were that the lowest scores contributing to the lowest scoring measure – Clinic access & facilities, were *Ease of getting to the clinic* (86%) and *Being seen on time* (82%).

The patients comments which came in daily were automatically attributed to clinics so they became an operational tool. Most were highly complimentary.

## PROM Scores

The EQ5D and the Foot Health Score showed similar gains of 10%-13% in health after treatment. When the results were split by patient age, gain reduced with increasing age until in the 81-90 year age band, no gain was seen. This is because these patients may have other conditions limiting gain but does put into perspective the relative value of treatment provided.

A more detailed breakdown by the individual questions in the FHS shows that there was an improvement in all aspects except the "self help" aspects of nail care which showed a slight deterioration. This is considered to be due to some patients having unrealistic expectations that ongoing basic nail care would be provided which is not the case at South Birmingham who provide a high risk service, but receive a number of inappropriate referrals.

## Conclusion

The aims of the project had been met and it was shown that comprehensive experience & outcome measurement could be achieved with minimal effort using the COM-Q service. In particular the Podiatry Service was pleased to see the very high response rates and representative coverage which was particularly re-assuring. The ability to drill down in the results by clinic, patient type, age etc. was particularly useful in understanding the patient perceived gain in health as a result of the treatment provided to new patients in different groups.

Mandy Cadge, Podiatry Services Manager said "Once the data flows had been established, the continuous measurement was very easy with no effort required on the part of the Podiatry service. It was re-assuring to get good quantitative scores in addition to the motivating comments from patients. The PROM scores were particularly useful in demonstrating the value of our services"

Further Information about the COM-Q service can be obtained from Stuart Mathieson on 07973 212306 or via email [Stuart.Mathieson@CoMetrica.co.uk](mailto:Stuart.Mathieson@CoMetrica.co.uk)  
More case studies are available on the website: [www.CoMetrica.co.uk](http://www.CoMetrica.co.uk)

