

**In times of economic restraint, quantifying the value of health services provided becomes even more important. This case study describes how Solent Healthcare Podiatry Services used patient outcomes to evaluate the impact of their prevention team work.**

When services are faced with limited or reduced funding yet demand continues to increase, an equitable means of evaluating the benefits of services provided becomes a key tool in planning services.

Traditionally, services have been commissioned on the basis of historical demand and waiting lists with little matching of outcomes and provision. With the new government's focus on health outcomes, services are increasingly looking for a means to prove the effectiveness of their services and prioritise delivery.

With an increasing emphasis on patients perception of value in public services, patient reported outcome measures (PROMS) and patient reported experience measures (PREMS) become the key tools in providing this assurance. Using patient reported measures has the additional benefit over traditional clinical ratings in that it provides a strong patient mandate where change needs to be considered.

**Outcome Measures**

Health outcome measures in the form of PROMS are useful in that they can be standardised and allow comparison and benchmarking in terms of health status before and after treatment. This can be translated into recognised "Quality of Life" metrics such as Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYS). However, one of the drawbacks of some PROMS is that based on their pharmaceutical research heritage, they can have many questions and be less successful for mainstream service use. There is a balance to be struck between individual reliability achieved through repetitive content and cohort reliability achieved through high survey volumes.

The choice of which PROMS and PREMS to use in mainstream and specialist areas to get a representative, reliable and sensitive results requires specialist advice and resources.

**A comprehensive approach**

When the Podiatry Service of Solent Healthcare needed to measure the outcomes and experience of their prevention team patients, they chose the COM-Q service provided by CoMetrica. This service provided the necessary inclusion and flexibility, and included consultancy to help with measure choice and interpretation.

Mathew King, Prevention Team Leader, needed not only to measure Podiatry outcomes, but also the patient understanding and motivation provided by his

team's role in providing more general health advice.

**Measurement Aims**

The service had carried out their own outcome survey before but found the work involved laborious and overwhelming to achieve even basic high level reported results.

A better system was needed to achieve the following aims:

- To measure clinical outcomes of the treatment, as perceived by patients
- To measure the experience & satisfaction of the Podiatry service patients by clinic and patient type
- To measure health advice impact by having dynamic question content matched to individual patients for Diabetes, Weight management, Smoking Cessation, Falls Risk and Alcohol consumption
- 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**

1000 patients over a 5 week period in September/ October 2010 were included, covering all patients seen by the team.

**Census Points**

Following consultation with CoMetrica, the department chose to measure baseline EQ5D general health status score and an FHS2 foot health score at the treatment start together with health advice measures to assess the understanding and motivation provided by the advice

A second census point 90 days after a new referral was used to assess the impact of the patient's podiatry treatment and any health advice given together with the patients perception of clinical competency.

At both stages, a satisfaction score and comment opportunity was provided.

The CoMetrica service included access to standardised PROM and experience measures so little work was required in selecting the questions to be used. The dynamic content meant that no irrelevant questions were asked minimising content and maximising response rates.

Solent Healthcare Podiatry Service chose the COM-Q service from CoMetrica to evaluate the impact of the work of their prevention team.

Mike Townson, Professional Head of Podiatry, needed to measure the outcomes achieved by this team. A project was set up by Mathew King, Prevention Team Leader with CoMetrica in September 2010 to measure ALL patients seen by the team.

Mike and Mathew chose the COM-Q service for the following reasons:

- Comprehensive cover of all patients rather than sampling
- No extra work for staff
- Flexible, dynamic question content linked to specific patients so the impact of health advice given could be evaluated.
- Ability to use standard measures
- Continuous measurement with quantitative & qualitative results
- Results linked to patient data

Patient comments and quantitative results were seen within a week of going live. High response rates were achieved which quantified a gain in foot health and general health with good experience scores. The impact of health advice for relevant patients could be seen and the results continue to be reported live.

Measures used at each census point			
Measures	Questions	Treatment start	After 90 days
Generic health PROM – EQ5D-5	5	✓	✓
Foot health PROM – FHS 2	5 + comment	✓	✓
Experience: Clinical competency	6 + comment		✓
Health Advice: sections: Smoking Cessation and/or Weight Management and/or Diabetes and/or Falls	3 per theme used	advice given & motivation	impact
Experience: Overall satisfaction	1 + comment + proxy indicator	✓	✓

## How the service works

The COM-Q service works on a continuous daily basis triggered by secure data from the Trusts information service. This creates personalised electronic questionnaires at each census point. 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.

Patients were invited to respond on-line or complete the included paper questionnaire. 98% of patients chose the paper route and most returned their questionnaires within a few days to CoMetrica's reading centre to be immediately read into the COM-Q system. The podiatry service could then see results daily.

## High response rates

The project is still running, there have been 511 responses to-date and the response rate is expected to exceed 60%. Since all patients were included, no follow-up letters or telephone phone calls were required to make the results statistically valid.

## Results

Composite scores for the two PROMS showed a 16% improvement in foot health and general health of new patients after 90 days of treatments. Overall satisfaction was at 92% at the start of treatment and 91% after 90 days. Clinical competency, which included the key received communication scored 81% after 90 days.

	Scale	At treatment start	After 90 days
Responses	n	207	304
Generic health PROM – EQ5D 5	0= feel like “death” 1= perfect health	0.49	0.57
Foot health PROM - FHS2	0= maximum pain, mobility restriction 1= no pain, restriction	0.51	0.58
Clinical Competency perceived	0% = “poorest” 100% = “best possible”		81%
Experience: Overall satisfaction	0% = “poorest” 100% = “best possible”	92%	91%
Health Advice (only for relevant patients)	Health Advice (only for relevant patients)	Motivational ?	Made a difference ?
Diabetes	Explanations understood of impact, specific advice given	80%	
Smoking		60%	17%
Weight Management		67%	18%
Falls Risk		Insufficient data currently	

The FHS2 measure showed improvements in mobility, pain level & frequency, concern and perceived foot health. More detailed reports showed that Diabetic patients had the greatest improvement in foot health although results for some diagnoses are currently inconclusive due to low volumes.

Patients perception of competency and care & concerns was high amongst most clinics. The health advice for relevant patients was well received by patients. In some patients, a measurable impact of the advice was seen after 90 days (e.g. Smoking 17% and Weight management 18%)

## Conclusion

Although the project is still running, clear quantitative evidence of the value of the podiatry intervention service is seen in general and foot specific health. In addition, the health advice which is being given to relevant patients is being recognised and understood by patients with some reporting an improvement as a result. Response rates are very high with statistically robust results emerging.

Mike Townson, Professional head of Podiatry said “the continuous measurement was very easy with no effort required on the part of the Podiatry service. Having results linked to patient data was an important benefit and our aim is now to extend this outcomes measurement service to other parts of the Solent Healthcare Podiatry 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)

