

Developing an outcome scale for mental health: A validation study in Palestine and Colombia

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The Mental Health Outcomes Scale (MHOS) is under development as a multidimensional score, which takes the patient's perspective into account. When coupled with the therapist's assessment through the Clinical Global Impression (CGI) scale, MHOS could help evaluate interventions. Here we present results from validation studies in two contexts.

Thirteen adult and 14 children's items were identified across several languages and contexts through literature review, community focus and expert consensus groups. Each item, quantified on a five point scale for a 2-week recall period was scored by adding difficulties and subtracting coping items uniformly. MHOS was translated/back-translated from English and pilot tested in Cauca, Colombia and Hebron, occupied Palestinian territories. Reliability was assessed by re-interviewing the subject and close family member, convergent validity by comparison to clinical appraisal through CGI.

The studies enrolled 150 (Cauca) and 152 (Hebron) participants between December 2013 and August 2014. MHOS showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.8$), test-retest (ICC= 0.9 and 0.7) and inter-rater reliability (ICC = 0.7 and 0.8) in Cauca and Hebron respectively.

Correlation with function and symptom scores of CGI and the Symptom Rating Scale scores were lower, $r_s = 0.2-0.6$ for both for adults and children in both contexts. Concordance between the two evaluation systems was modest to low ($r_s = 0.3$ and 0.5 in Cauca; 0.5 and 0.3 Hebron, for children and adults, respectively) due to the great variability in MHOS scores among both CGI outcome groups.

When coded simply, the Spanish and Arabic versions of MHOS showed good repeatability and consistency across raters but limited concordance with therapist ratings. Comparison to other instruments and alternative scoring algorithms may result in convergence of findings, but it is also possible that therapists and patients may have somewhat differing constructs of well-being.

Development of outcome scales for mental health programs can help to improve their delivery as well as providing essential feedback to staff.