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Child And Youth Outcome Measures: Examining Current Use And Acceptability Of Measures In Mental Health Services, And Recommending Future Directions.

Abstract

This study was initiated by the New Zealand Mental Health Research and Development Strategy (MHRDS) and funded by the Ministry of Health in order to establish the best routine outcome measures to be introduced to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and relevant Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) in New Zealand.

The study had three phases:

1. questionnaire survey and consultation with clinicians and service managers;
2. focus groups with young consumers of mental health services; and
3. focus groups with parents/family of consumers.

A questionnaire was sent by email to all CAMHS and NGO clinicians on a national database held at the Werry Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health and on two email discussion groups, one for CAMHS workers and one specifically for child and adolescent psychiatrists. Although the number of clinicians working in this area is unknown, we believe these are the most comprehensive lists of staff working in the sector. Clinicians were asked about a) knowledge and experience of measures, b) instruments they consider useful/not useful, c) questions relating to Health of Nation Outcome Scale for Children and Adolescents (HoNOSCA) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and d) current systems of data collections. In addition, semi-structured telephone interviews of clinical co-ordinators across New Zealand were carried out to obtain more in-depth information regarding systems and management issues that may aid or hinder the introduction of outcomes measures.

Six focus groups with children and young people and four focus groups with parents/family members of young people were held, including specific groups with Maori and Pacific Island people. Consumers were asked to comment on meaningfulness, practical use, and acceptability of measures used by clinicians, including the HONOSCA and the SDQ, their experience of the use of outcomes measures and any concerns or suggestions they had.

Quantitative data from the clinician survey and qualitative data from a thematic analysis of material from the focus groups will be presented.

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