

## Obstacles to outcome measurement in rural mental health care

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The main objectives of this project in rural Western Australia were to collect information, compare and evaluate the functioning of novel types of psychiatric services, including rooming-in facilities, using outcome measurement tools, and to assess the attitude of mental health professionals towards routine outcome measurement. Two outcome measurement tools were used for the first time for this purpose, in rural health services: the Health of the Nation Outcome Scales and the World Health Organization Short Disability Assessment Schedule.

While eleven rural sites were trained in the use of outcome measurements using tele-psychiatry, only three were able to participate in the data collection that spanned a year (July 2000 to June 2001) and shed information on 39 patients. Two of these sites were rooming-in facilities with different models of care and patient characteristics. Shortage of staff, lack of adequate local information technology support on sites and technical difficulties limited participation.

The assessment of staff attitudes towards routine outcome measurement revealed a need to provide staff with reasons and incentives for incorporating outcome measurement into routine practice, in addition to provision of thorough and ongoing training and support in time and resources from management.

A paper from this study has been published in *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*:

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