

Implementing electronic patient-reported outcome measures (ePROMs) in clinical settings: a meta-review of barriers and enablers

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Parallel Session 3B, Grand Ballroom 5, November 20, 2019, 13:30 - 15:00

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Background

ePROMs are used within clinical practice for individual patient care, service evaluation and policy decisions. However, practical, methodological and attitudinal barriers may hamper their implementation within clinical practice.

Objectives

We aimed to determine how best to implement ePROMs for patient, clinician and service benefit, focusing on barriers/enablers to implementation.

Method

Following methods for umbrella reviews, we searched five electronic databases for reviews on the use or implementation of ePROMs in any health condition and setting. Two reviewers independently applied inclusion criteria and extracted data. Key results were qualitatively synthesised.

Results

From 48 reviews, we found ePROMs can effectively: improve communication between patients and clinicians; screen/monitor patient needs, mental health issues, and treatment-related toxicity; and evaluate benefit of healthcare and services. However, barriers to their implementation limit their effectiveness: 1) pre-existing clinical practice, culture and behaviours; 2) lack of knowledge/understanding of ePROMs (e.g. how to use/interpret ePROM data); 3) difficulty choosing appropriate and informative ePROMs for patient management and service improvement within and across health conditions and contexts; and 4) lack of infrastructure and understanding how to design effective and feasible IT solutions.

Conclusions

Conclusive evidence supports ePROM use for care planning and decision-making to provide timely person-centred care, improve communication, and ensure appropriate referrals based on identified patient need. However, barriers to ePROM implementation limit their usefulness. Implementation enablers (engaging stakeholders during development/delivery/evaluation (bottom up), integration of ePROMs in clinical guidelines (top down), and automatic flagging of clinically important scores) may be the key to their full potential.