

Journal Watch

Reliability testing of the FAMCARE-2 scale: measuring family carer satisfaction with palliative care

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Abstract

Measuring carers' perceived satisfaction with services is crucial if services are going to continually improve their responsiveness to the needs of those they serve. The aim of this study was to assess the reliability of the next generation FAMCARE tool, which was adapted to reflect inpatient and team-based care using palliative care services who are participating in the Australian Palliative Care Outcomes Collaboration. FAMCARE-2 was distributed to a consecutive cohort of carers whilst in the caregiving role nationally. Analyses of internal consistency, generated structure and relationships of satisfaction with service provision by three demographic variables were undertaken. A total of 497 carers were recruited from 29 palliative care services across Australia, a mix of inpatient and community services. The scale achieved a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93) and item-to-total correlation coefficient of 0.49–0.72. Factor analysis of FAMCARE-2 revealed a 4-factor structure (management of physical symptoms and comfort, provision of information, family support and patient psychological care). Results of the survey indicated satisfaction with service provision across the FAMCARE-2 subscales. Older, female carers without a culturally and linguistically diverse background were more satisfied with service provision. We conclude that FAMCARE-2 is a psychometrically sound instrument useful for measuring family carer satisfaction with service provision in a variety of palliative care settings.

Strengths

- National, multi-site study from a range of clinical settings
- Diverse sample of caregivers across the socio-demographic spectrum
- Minimization of selection bias due to consecutive cohort sample
- Prospective data collection while patients were receiving care (minimization of recall bias)

Weaknesses/Limitations

- Population receiving care predominantly cancer (80%)
- Underrepresentation of smaller (often rural) services
- Potential for skewed responses as questionnaires distributed and collected by service providers

Relevance to Palliative Care

The ultimate goal of palliative care is to provide services that mirror patients' and family members' goals of care. The FAMCARE, and the next generation, FAMCARE-2, are useful tools for assessing family members' perceptions of and satisfaction with end of life care for their loved one. This is a very timely topic given the recent endorsement by Accreditation Canada of the FAMCARE as an outcome evaluation measure of palliative care services. Further work is needed to determine the most appropriate timing of administration of the FAMCARE and/or FAMCARE-2, as well as how well family members capture patients' experiences of palliative care services.