

Using Electronic Tablets to Collect Outcome Data in Palliative Care Help or Hindrance?

Jana Witt (jana.witt@kcl.ac.uk), E Iris Groeneveld, Alice M Brown, Paramjote K Kaler, Caty J Pannell, Fliss EM Murtagh

Background

- Patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs), such as the Integrated Palliative care Outcome Scale (IPOS), are measures completed by patients.
- Traditionally, patients completed such measures on paper. However, advances in technology have resulted in a myriad of other options, e.g. laptops, smart phones and electronic e/tablets that could be used for data collection.
- While several studies to date have shown that use of e/tablets is feasible and acceptable in oncology settings, it is not known whether this holds true for more general palliative care settings, where patients may have a variety of diagnoses.
- This study sought to assess whether use of e/tablets for the collection of PROMs in palliative care services is feasible.

Summary

- Use of e/tablets with palliative care patients is feasible and could streamline data collection providing real time data.
- Most patients found the e/tablet device easy to use (4 of 7), read (6 of 7) and navigate (6 of 7).
- Patients particularly liked the immediate transfer of their data into electronic records.
- Several patients struggled with the reactivity of the touchscreen technology, particularly if they were first time users.
- Research nurses emphasised the need for someone to be present and support patients during completion.
- Additional problems included limited WiFi connectivity and the weight of the tablet device.

Take Home Message

Using e/tablets in palliative care settings is a feasible and acceptable approach for data collection in the future, particularly for collection of PROMs from patients. However, before such devices are rolled out across services, problems with reactivity, connectivity and weight should be addressed.

Methods

We used a mixed methods (survey and qualitative interview) approach (embedded within a validation study of the IPOS in two urban UK hospitals) to determine whether use of e/tablets with palliative care patients is feasible and acceptable.

Patient survey questions:

1. How easy or difficult was it to read the tablet / paper survey?
2. How easy or difficult was it to use the tablet / pen and paper survey to respond to questions?
3. How easy or difficult was it to move through the sections on the tablet survey / in the paper survey the way you wanted to?
4. Was the weight of the tablet comfortable to use?
5. In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with using the tablet / pen and paper survey?
6. Would you recommend that other patients complete the survey with the tablet / pen and paper?

Additionally we interviewed the research nurses who supported the study.

What participants thought



F, 87, Cancer

I didn't find it difficult but I mean I couldn't...I'd never used a computer in my life so it was just getting the right pressure to put on it without making it go mad.



F, 35, Non-cancer

Because it was a tablet, you didn't have to lean against something or put something behind it. It was just easy, you know. It was the right size. Probably because I've used one before. I prefer it.



M, 64, Cancer

Doing it on the tablet, that goes directly through to the doctor's notes. Whereas paper would take a bit longer.



F, 35, Non-cancer

I suppose if I was in pain then I probably wouldn't be able to hold it in my hand. I would probably just have to put it on my lap. Maybe I would have found it a bit heavy.



Research Nurse 2

I would say though, again, depending who we approached, they would need help to complete it because you couldn't leave just the questionnaire or a paper or a tablet with somebody to complete.



Research Nurse 1

We had a period of time when connectivity was a bit of an issue. [...] it does seem to depend on where they're sitting, because there are quite a lot of pillars and it's in the basement. [...] where it was really slow and then, of course, it takes so long.

Participants

Eleven patients (aged 33-87; 63% male; 27% non-cancer diagnosis) took part in a brief telephone survey and interview (17% of total study cohort). Five had used e/tablet only, four had used paper only, and two had used both formats. Of the seven who used the e/tablet, six had never used one before.



Visit www.pos-pal.org for more information and to download the Integrated Palliative care Outcome Scale (IPOS)

This work was supported in part by the National Institute for Health Research – Programme Grants for Applied Research (project number RP-PG-1210-12015). The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, MRC, CCF, NETSCC, the NIHR Programme Grants for Applied Research programme or the Department of Health.

The project is also working in collaboration with the NIHR Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) Palliative and End of Life Care Theme. The Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) South London is part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), and is a partnership between King's Health Partners, St. George's, University London, and St George's Healthcare NHS Trust.

