

Identifying Outcome Indicators for Evaluating Services

Provided by Community Care Access Centres (CCACs)*

December 20, 2000

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*This research was supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Dr. Coyte is supported by funds from the Canadian Institute of Health Research and the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation for his Chair in Health Care Settings and Canadians. The authors have benefited from the input of an HMRU Advisory Committee. The members of the Committee are listed in Appendix 1. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any funding agency or institution.

This report may be referred as: Coyte PC, Baranek P, Daly T: Identifying Outcome Indicators for Evaluating Services Provided by Community Care Access Centres (CCACs). Report prepared under grant 02709 from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario to the University of Toronto, December 2000.

Executive Summary

The objectives of this report are to propose a conceptual framework to evaluate the effectiveness of home care services in Ontario, and to identify potentially appropriate measures to assess the effectiveness of such services. The report has benefited from the assistance of an Advisory Committee, the members of which can be found in Appendix 1.

The need to identify outcome and performance measures and a framework for evaluation of home care services arises because of a number of different pressures. Health system restructuring, improvements in drugs and technology, and the aging of the population have dramatically increased the current and future demand and utilization of home care services. As a result, care has shifted into an arena where effectiveness research is in its infancy. Moreover, the decrease in care covered by the *Canada Health Act (CHA)* and the consequent increase in care not covered by the national standards enunciated under the *Act*, necessitate the introduction of some form of accountability for the continued safety and accessibility of care for Canadians. At the same time, a growing distrust of governments and the increase in consumerism has given rise to citizen demands for better public accountability of spending and reporting of service quality. Lastly, Ontario's reformed home care sector which relies on competitive contracting out of services to not-for-profit and for-profit provider agencies requires the identification and development of performance and outcome measures for the fair and effective selection of home care provider organizations by Ontario's Community Care Access Centres.

Home health managers, providers and policy-makers have a need for the development of performance and outcome measures on which to inform and base

decisions. They continue to be frustrated by the lack of data concerning the costs and consequences of in-home services. This lack of evidence means: home care managers are limited in their ability to undertake evidence-based decisions; home care health professional and providers are limited in their ability to practice evidence-based care; and provincial and federal policy makers are limited in their ability to develop evidence-based health policy.

A comprehensive review of the research and grey literature on outcome indicators for services provided in the home, a collation of information on the development of in-home service outcome indicators currently underway in Canada and the U.S., and information gathered from contacts with key individual stakeholders form the information sources for this report.

The report provides a conceptual framework with which to evaluate outcomes of care and the performances of agencies at the micro (individual recipient or service provider), meso (provider agency or CCAC) and macro level (region or province). Definitions of key terms are discussed which include measurement, outcomes, performance, assessment tools and effectiveness.

Five criteria are used to assess the utility of particular tools identified in the literature. Three of these criteria are psychometric properties of the tools; that is, validity (does the tool measure what it purports to measure?), reliability (refers to the stability or consistency of the measure), and responsiveness (the ability of the tool to measure changes in health and social care outcomes or performance over time or across organizations). The last two criteria are feasibility (the administrative burden and

financial cost of implementing the tool) and scope (the range of measures that the tool collects).

A number of initiatives in Canada and the US are described. The project, Development of a National Indicators and a Reporting System for Home Care, mounted by the Canadian Institute for Health Information is the most ambitious one in Canada. While the CIHI initiative is very important, its objective is for the development of indicators for reporting and comparison at the provincial and national level. The framework developed in this paper allows for assessments and comparisons at the micro, meso and macro level.

A summary of assessment tools used to measure and evaluate the health and social care outcomes provided in the home and the performance of agencies providing that care is reported. Each tool is described and assessed against the five criteria where possible. Although many more assessment tools and indicators have been used in the evaluation of health and social care, this report only focuses on those already applied in the home setting.

This report represents the first step in the development of outcome/performance measures and assessment tools to be used to evaluation home care services in Ontario. It provides the reader with a framework within which to conceptualize the complexities of assessing care provided in the home, and a list of indicators and tools to review. The next steps in the development of tools and measures is the broad dissemination of the report across multiple stakeholder communities. A focus group in early 2001 will be held to discuss the issues raised in the report, to come to a consensus on outcomes and tools to be used in the Ontario context, and to prioritize the development of such tools.

