

# Quality measurements - what is it good for?

## Absolutely something

### Introduction

An increasing population with complex healthcare needs require municipal healthcare services of high quality (1). Various tools and measurements are implemented to assess service quality and thereby contribute to its improvement (2,3).

Nurses in long-term care services are central to the direct treatment of recipients and the registration and application of results from quality measurements. More research into nurses' experiences with quality measurement and their importance in daily work is required. We explored long-term care nurses' experiences with quality measurements and their significance in achieving service quality.

### Methods

Semi-structured focus groups with 43 nurses and 240 hours of participant observation were carried out in 12 Norwegian nursing homes and home care units. Data was analysed using qualitative content analysis (4).

### Results

The nurses experienced quality measures as beneficial for the services but also questioned the *advantages* and *impact* of several assessments. Although the nurses regularly used measurements, *none of them were used by all the participants*. The nurses experienced challenges and uncertainties when documenting results from the quality measurements. The reasons were unfamiliarity with the quality measures across service levels, unclear recording practices, and different documentation methods.

The significance of the quality measurements experienced by nurses can be interpreted from *two perspectives*:

#### Clinical perspective

Nurses applied a 'here and now' view and assessed the quality measurements based on their benefits and impact on the care and treatment delivered. In particular, National Early Warning Score (NEWS) (5) were considered beneficial, as it revealed changes in the care recipients' health status and gave directions for further treatment.

*"... NEWS gives us a better overview of the resident's general condition and situation as we can uncover abnormal measurements or illness..."*

Participant 9, long-term care unit

*"The measurement is like a common language [...] used in dialogue with hospitals, emergency department and doctors. It helps them to know what to say..."*

Participant observation, home care unit

#### Collaborative perspective

The nurses found quality measurements beneficial for treatment of care recipients in the present and important in collaboration dialogues and coordination between service levels. At the same time, the nurses pointed out that different parts of the services used different measurements, and that the knowledge of the resident and professional judgment could affect the measurement results.

### Conclusion

Long-term care nurses use several quality measurements as a part of their efforts to create high-quality services.

However, the quality measurements are experienced to have limited benefit in practice.

Further development of quality measurements should emphasise the measurements' clinical and collaborative functions to strengthen their applicability in clinical practice.

Randi O. Haave  
PhD student  
[Randi.O.Haave@ntnu.no](mailto:Randi.O.Haave@ntnu.no)



Line Melby  
Associate professor



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