

## ***Is usage of digital questionnaires in the outpatient clinic feasible?***

### **Authors:**

W. de Blok, Ma. Advanced nurse practitioner urology,  
H.G van der Poel, PHD, Urologist  
Netherlands Cancer Institute-Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital (NKI-AVL).

Men with localized prostate cancer (PCA) form a considerable group in the outpatient clinic of the urology department. In September 2005 the urology department started an exclusive outpatient clinic for men with localized prostate cancer (PCA). At the same time the hospital introduced an advanced nurse practitioner (ANP). With the treatment of patients with a genitourinary tumor, it is often necessary to ask about signs and symptoms before and after treatment for (nursing) diagnostic purposes. Many tasks in care for patients with PCA in the outpatient clinic can be performed by nurses and advanced nurse practitioners (ANP). In light of objective data sampling and streamlining of care we envision the need for digitized patients questionnaires allowing rapid and accurate monitoring of functional and emotional aspects of treatment.

Detmar et-al (2002) stated that by incorporating HRQL assessment into the outpatient visits the physicians' awareness of their patients' health related quality of life was heightened. By implementing HRQL questionnaires in the outpatient clinic of the ANP signs and symptoms of the illness can be measured and the ANP can adjust care to the needs of the patient. Objective assessment of patient's complaints becomes extremely valuable in monitoring progress of genitourinary complaints after treatment of localized prostate cancer. Moreover, it is possible to use outcomes of the questionnaires for scientific purposes.

The use of validated questionnaires for this purpose has already been established in the practice at our prostate clinic. By improving the logistics and by making things easier for the patient, use of touch screen computers can contribute to improvement of the present practice.

The objective of the project will be to test implementing usage of digital questionnaires in the setting of our outpatient clinic for patients with localized prostate cancer (PCA) Main objective is to study feasibility at the outdoor patient clinic using digital questionnaires.

The spreading of questionnaires, assembling and processing is a time-consuming effort. It is our hypothesis that with digital answering, the questioning will have the same quality as it would have with paper and pencil. Furthermore we hope that outcomes can be used during the outpatient visit afterwards.

We propose to investigate the feasibility of using digital questionnaires prior to an outpatient visit with the ANP. By using a touch screen computer, the outcome can immediately be used during the visit with the ANP.

By testing this method of questioning we will gain insight into its feasibility in an outpatient clinic. Assessment of patient satisfaction with the system will be an integral part of the study.

The overall goal is to be able to use validated questionnaires to obtain information about patient complaints for the purpose of uncovering HRQL issues for the purpose of anticipating on those issues after the answering. The objective of this study is to investigate if problems can occur when acquiring information among patients when digitally obtained questionnaires.

The purpose of the project will be to get an answer on the following questions:

- Is it possible to use a touch screen operated computer instead of paper and pencil in the outpatient clinic for use of HRQL questionnaires?
- Will patients be able to use the digital questionnaire system?
- Will patients be satisfied with using this system as they are now?
- Is hospital personnel able to attribute to the logistics?

It is very important that nurses or advanced nurse practitioners gather information about the situation of the patient related to treatment and illness for the purpose of assessing if an intervention should be made. It is a good method to use standardized tools for this gathering of information.

The method of research will be a feasibility study.

A prospective group of men with an appointment at the prostate clinic will form the sample group. They will fill in the questionnaire using the touch screen computer and automated processing.

The present HRQL questionnaires and questions about the medical history will be used and after the study period evaluation will be done using an interview and written/digital questionnaire on the various aspects of the system.

We expect it will be feasible to ask seven patients per week to participate. In eight weeks total the data can be collected. Extrapolating the data will take about another 2 months; in total the study will take four months.

Because we will use existing questionnaires added with questions measuring critical indicators, there will be no development costs there. Cost of hardware and costs of developing some additional software for the database will take approximately €2500,--.

Decisions about projects that coincide will be made in January 2008. The hospital staff is aware of this project being submitted for to the EAUN research plan award.

Urological nursing has much to do with signs and symptoms of the illness. We think that by using HRQL validated questionnaires via digital questioning, results can be obtained in a proper and efficient manner. This study can provide nurses with a tool to acquire information. If the results of the study are positive, it might attribute to a motivation for buying a module in the hospital electronic patient data system.

## **Reference**

Detmar, S.B, Muller, M.J, Schornagel, J.H, Wever, L.D.V, Aaronson, N.K. 2002, Health related quality of life assessments and patient physician communication, JAMA. 2002 Dec 18;288(23):3027-34