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## **Evaluating occupational therapy practice in oncology and palliative care – challenge or opportunity?**

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**Introduction:** The diverse scope of an occupational therapist's (OTs) role has expanded over many years which includes opportunities to specialise and impact across a number of areas, including oncology and palliative care. In the Welsh context 'Prudent Healthcare' focuses on how services evolve to provide the best quality patient-centred care and occupational therapy is no exception. Evaluation of practice is crucial to modern occupational therapy practice.

**Objectives:** The aim was to investigate how OTs, working in oncology and palliative care, evaluate their practice. Objectives were to identify:

- if standardised outcome measures are being used, and if so which one
- non-standardised forms of evaluation and their benefit
- training undertaken by OTs in the use of outcome measures.

**Method:** An online survey was designed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions. The survey was completed by 10 OTs from across the UK.

**Results:** Findings showed that the majority of respondents were not using a standardised outcome measure despite literature recommendations. Nearly all participants used non-standardised measures, including patient evaluation questionnaires, to quality improve and audit their service. Finally, a lack of training in the use of outcome measures was identified.

**Conclusion:** Further research is required:

- To evaluate the development and implementation of patient evaluation tools with the aim of improving quality care for patients.
- To investigate the training needs of OTs in relation to outcome measures. Increased investment in training could ensure that OTs adopt appropriate outcome measures to evaluate, and enable them to demonstrate the value, of their practice.