

Evaluation of the Head and Neck Cancer Patient Concerns Inventory in routine multidisciplinary Speech and Language Therapy/Dietetics follow up clinics.

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Background

- The Patient Concerns Inventory ¹(PCI-H&N) is a robustly designed 57-item prompt list specifically for use in routine follow-up clinics for patients with head and neck cancer (HNC). Patients are asked on each visit to select issues they would specifically like to talk about during their consultation.
- It is a specialised tool specific to head and neck cancer , and the items address issues of concern /symptoms/ sequelae of treatment. It is simple to use and can be completed at each appointment to guide intervention. It focuses the consultation and enables patients' needs to be highlighted and addressed.
- To date the PCI-H&N has been used mainly by Consultants in HNC clinics. However, it covers a number of issues which are symptom drivers for oral intake. Concerns relating to Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Dietitian (Diet) issues are often highlighted, with chewing/eating, weight, swallowing, speech/voice/being understood, in the ten most common concerns raised by patients.²
- Speech and Language Therapy and Dietetic review following HNC is an integral part of multidisciplinary support. It provides a point of reference to discuss and assess treatment outcomes, give advice, and deliver interventions to aid recovery.
- Patients in our Trust attend Multidisciplinary team (MDT) Speech and Language Therapy(SLT) and Dietitian (Diet) rehab clinics early post treatment, and we felt that this presents an ideal opportunity to use the PCI-H&N to address concerns and support them through their recovery .

Aim

- The aim of this study was to evaluate the use of the PCI-H&N in patients attending routine Speech and Language (SLT) and Dietitian (Diet) post treatment out-patient clinics, as an adjunct to standard clinical care.

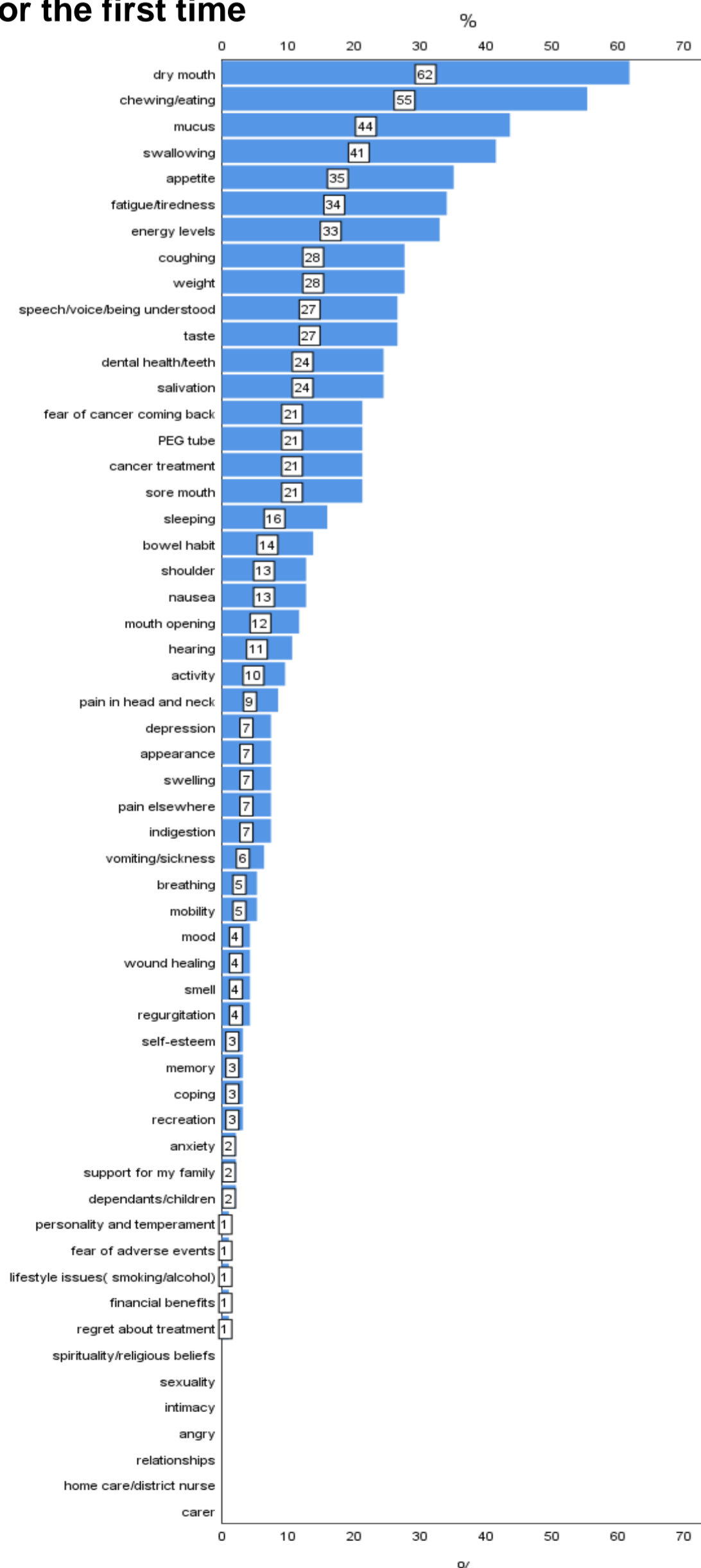
Methods

- Subjects were recruited prospectively from 30th January 2019 to 19th March 2020 from two clinics across one trust involving two Speech and Language Therapists and two Dietitians. Patients were eligible for the study if they were diagnosed with Primary Squamous cell cancer of the oropharynx, nasopharynx or hypopharynx , treated with surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy with curative intent .Patients completed the single sheet paper PCI-H&N, ³ and a single quality of life (QOL) question prior to their consultation. From August 2019, this was followed by completion of a feedback form.

Results

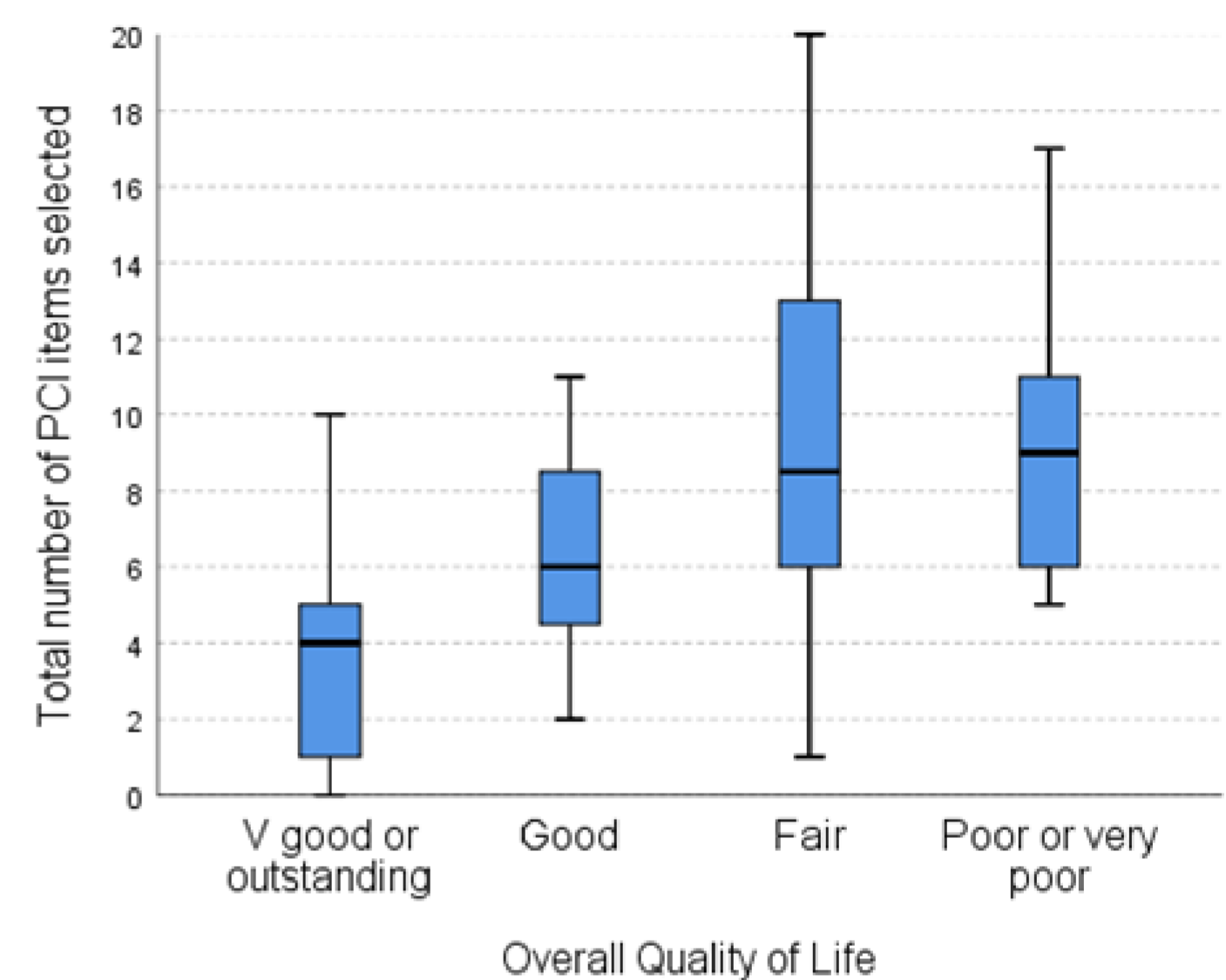
- 94 patients were recruited from 100 consecutive patients, first using the PCI-H&N from 30th January 2019 to 19th March 2020 at a median (IQR) of 2.4 (1.3-7.1) months after the end of treatment.
- When first used , the most common selections were dry mouth (62%), chewing/eating (55%), mucus (44%), swallowing (41%), appetite (35%), fatigue/tiredness (34%), energy levels (33%), coughing (28%), weight (28%), speech/voice/being understood (27%) and taste (27%) (Figure 1)

Figure 1 PCI-H&N items selected by 94 patients using the PCI-H&N for the first time



- Overall QOL (six-point scale) was associated with the total number of PCI items selected, Spearman Rho= 0.47, p<0.001, n=91. (Figure 2)

Figure 2 Number of PCI-H&N items selected initially, by overall QOL



- From August 2019 there were 35 evaluation forms completed by 33 patients, 16 after the first PCI-H&N and 18 after a subsequent use. Results were almost unanimously positive (Table 1).

Table 1. Patient evaluation of using the PCI-H&N

'very easy' or 'easy' to complete	100% (35/35)
'not at all' a problem in the running of appointments	94% (33/35)
'definitely yes' the PCI items were discussed in consultations	91% (32/35)
'definitely yes' the PCI helped communication with the clinician	91% (32/35)
'definitely yes' they wanted to continue using the PCI	83% (29/35)

Conclusions

- This is the first time the PCI-H&N has been reported in the context of patients attending post treatment SLT/Diet clinics. Our data suggest that the single sheet paper form of the PCI-H&N is suitable for use in routine clinical practice, as an adjunct to standard clinical care.
- It helps raise some of the wider issues that could otherwise be missed, and is a suitable assessment tool specific to the swallowing, communication and nutrition needs of patients with HNC, post treatment.
- A wide range of concerns were reported across all the domains. Patients were offered SLT/Diet advice and interventions, and signposted to other services, such as the Dental Hygienist and Macmillan Get Active/Feel good service, where appropriate.
- Early detection of issues which impact on eating, drinking and communication, allows the opportunity for the identification, and provision, of Speech and Language Therapy and Dietetic interventions. These interventions can aid adaption, support patients through their recovery, and ultimately, promote better outcomes.

References

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- Rogers SN, Alvear A, Anesi A, Babin E, Balik A, Batstone M et al. Variations in concerns reported on the patient concerns inventory in patients with head and neck cancer from different health settings across the world. *Head Neck* 2020; 42(3):498-512.