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Outcome measurement pilot: Effectiveness of a holiday program for people with a mental illness and their Carers

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Background: Since the introduction of the National Mental Health Plan, there has been a focus on outcome measurement to demonstrate the effectiveness of mental health programs. This focus recently extended from government to non-government organisations. Accordingly, the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW (SFNSW) has undertaken to measure the effectiveness of their programs. This includes the holiday program, a pioneering venture by SFNSW.

Aims: 1. To examine the feasibility of using the WHO-5 Well-being Index to measure the effectiveness of a psychosocial holiday program for people affected by mental illness (consumers) and their carers. 2. To determine whether change in consumer and/or carer well-being results from a consumer holiday.

Method: Focus groups, interviews and surveys were completed with 15 consumers who had previously attended holidays, 6 who had not, 13 SFNSW staff, and 5 carers, to map expected outcomes of the program. These outcomes were then matched to the WHO-5. Staff administered the tool to 14 consumers at holiday commencement, conclusion and two weeks post-holiday. Researchers administered the tool to eight carers by post, to complete the day before the holiday, at holiday end, and two weeks post-holiday.

Results: The WHO-5 matched some of the intended outcomes of the holiday program - yet it failed to address socialisation, an important outcome to key stakeholders. Nevertheless, this tool may be effective in measuring changes in well-being resulting from a holiday program. Data analysis will be completed by the conference date.

Conclusion: Adequacy of the WHO-5 in measuring expected outcomes of the holiday program is questionable. Further investigation is required to identify a more suitable measurement tool, or indeed to develop one.

Learning Outcomes: 1. Feasibility of using the WHO-5 to measure effectiveness of a holiday program for consumers and their carers. 2. Effect of a holiday program on well-being of consumers and their carers.