

What is a Quality Measure?

A standardized assessment which quantifies the extent to which an individual unit within a population (person in a clinic, individual clinic amongst all clinics in a region) meets some criterion for quality of care.¹

A measurement tool, screen or flag that is used as a guide to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of client care, clinical support services and organizational functions that affect outcomes.²

Why Use Quality Measures in Primary Mental Health Care?

Most people with mental health problems are seen in primary health care (PHC) settings. Significant gaps exist between research evidence and mental health care in PHC and other settings. CEQM was intended to help address this care gap through building consensus regarding a set of quality measures that are evidence-informed.

“It’s hard to improve what you can’t measure”

Without consistent quality measurement systems in place to assess the impact of system reform, applying any lessons learned will be difficult. The creation of a nationally agreed upon set of quality measures is one way to assess the impact of the considerable improvement efforts already underway.

A flashlight in a dark room

The current challenge of embarking upon quality measurement work in health care has been compared to attempting to navigate a large, dark room with only a flashlight to illuminate one’s way. One must choose where to focus the light in order to navigate the room effectively and safely. Similarly, with health quality measurement, no current set of ideal measures exist that will allow us to have a full understanding of the whole system.

The CEQM project is designed to help Canadians focus their improvement efforts through building national consensus around a small set of quality measures.

1. Adapted from: http://www.qualitymeasures.ahrq.gov/resources/measure_use.aspx and Charlwood, P. et al. (1999). Outcome indicators: severe mental illness. Report of a Working Group. London: Department of Health

2. Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation. A Guide to the Development and Use of Performance Indicators, Ottawa, 1996.

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