

Abstract

Background: In contemporary mental health settings, needs assessment forms an important part in caring for patients with severe mental illness. However, a reliable and valid instrument, that serves the purpose of clinical assessment and outcome monitoring in the care of Chinese psychiatric patients, is lacking in Hong Kong.

Aims: To develop the Cantonese version of the Camberwell Assessment of Need (CanCAN) and to test its validity and reliability in a sample of local Chinese patients with severe mental illness. The needs identified by the staff and patients with the CanCAN are compared and the results compared with the previous European studies using the CAN.

Materials and methods: Questionnaire survey was performed to gather professional and staff views about needs assessment before the translation process. Then, the CAN was translated following rigorous procedures to ensure cross-cultural adaptation. Modifications were made after expert panel review and focus group discussion. Patients (n=66) and staff (n=66) were then interviewed, using the CanCAN, to assess the inter-rater and test-retest reliability. The correlation between the results of the CanCAN and the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) disability score was examined. Needs of in-patients and out-patients were compared. Patients' and staffs' rating was evaluated. Finally, the results was compared with four previous studies using the CAN.

Results The CanCAN had satisfactory inter-rater and test –retest reliability for both the patient and staff rating. Correlations of the inter-rater and test-retest reliability of the total number of needs identified by staff were 0.79 and 0.75; and by patients were 0.96 and 0.64 respectively. The CanCAN demonstrated good face validity and content validity. Concurrent validity was demonstrated by a weak correlation with the GAF disability score. Construct validity was shown by demonstrating the convergent and divergent validity. The mean number of needs identified by patient and staff were 4.3 and 3.6 respectively. The top five needs identified by patients were help with “psychotic symptoms”, “daytime activities”, “company of others”, “information about condition and treatment” and “accommodation”. The most serious unmet need identified by patient was help with “company of others” followed by “daytime activities”, “intimate relationships”, “information about condition and treatment” and “welfare benefits”. The needs identified by the staff and the patients were different and there was weak agreement on individual items. When comparing the results with the previous studies using the CAN, this study revealed a smaller number of unmet needs. “Daytime activities” and “company of others” were commonly found to be the important needs among different studies.

Conclusion The study demonstrated that the CanCAN is both a valid and reliable instrument for needs assessment for Hong Kong Chinese patients with severe mental illness and it provides options for future clinical practice and research. The most prevalent need and unmet need identified by patients in the present study was help with “psychotic symptoms” and help with “company of others” respectively. The staff and

patient had difference in perspective about needs assessment. Comparison of results with overseas studies showed that the CanCAN had comparable reliability. “Daytime activities” and “company of others” were shown to be the important needs in different studies.

Declaration of interest None