JOURNAL OF GERIATRIC CARE AND RESEARCH

Short report

Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL) scale: linguistic validation in Malayalam, an Indian language

Aloka Joy, Vasudevan V T Namboodiri, Manoj Therayil Kumar, Nilamadhab Kar

Abstract

Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL) is a self-reported measure of quality of life of people with mental illness, with a potential for use as a patient rated outcome measure. ReQoL in English has been designed and validated in United Kingdom. This paper describes the process of translation and validation of ReQoL in Malayalam, a language of predominant South Indian usage, especially in the state of Kerala. This was done by a team of mental health professionals at the Institute for Mind and Brain, in Kerala. The process involved translation, back-translation and piloting with patients. The Malayalam version is considered to be a valid translation of the original scale in English.

Key words

Malayalam, mental illness, quality of life, recovery, scale, translation

Introduction

Health-related Quality of Life is a growing concept in the area of health care. It assesses the short and long-term impact of a health condition on individual well-being and can be one of the measures of effectiveness of the interventions. Measuring quality of life (QOL) in mental illness is methodologically challenging. Most of the generic measures used in determining the Quality of Life of mentally ill patients fail to cover the concept entirely. The commonly used generic scales (WHO-QOL BREF, SF- 36, EQ- 5D) may appear nonspecific on occasions for mental illnesses.

Under these circumstances, there was a perceived need for a more specific scale for patients with mental illness. Researchers at The University of Sheffield have developed a new outcome measure called Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL) for mentally ill patients. It is a psychometrically validated tool for clinicians to monitor treatment outcome and it would aid decision making in recovery-oriented services. ReQoL has 2 versions - a 10 item version, ReQoL-10 and a 20 item version, ReQoL-20. ReQoL-10 can be used regularly for monitoring

progress while ReQoL-20 can help in clinical decision making and research.[1] It is suitable for mentally ill patients aged 16 and over. Items in ReQoL cover areas of QOL such as meaningful activity, belonging and relationships, control and autonomy, hope, self-perception, well-being and physical health. It is designed for the breadth of mental health problems from common mental health problems at one end to the severe forms at the other.[2]

ReQoL was constructed as a PROM (Patient Reported Outcome Measure) commissioned by the Department of Health for use in NHS, England. The developmental process progressed through the stages of forming the theoretical basis, generation of candidate items, content validation, psychometric evaluation and final item selection by combining the qualitative and quantitative evidence.[1] The scale was originally developed in the English language. ReQoL has been translated to many Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and Odia.[3,4,5,6] In this article, we are describing the translation of ReQoL from English to Malayalam. Malayalam is a classical Indian language spoken across the state of Kerala and neighbouring South Indian states, by around 38 million people.[7]

Methodology

The translation work started in May 2017. The translation was carried out according to the procedure recommended by 'Clinical Outcomes at Oxford University Innovation'.[8] The team included two forward translators, two back translators, a proof-reader (all of them were independent of each other), an in-country investigator and a co-investigator. All the team members were bilingual.

The translation work progressed through the following phases.

Phase 1 – Forward translation

- The two forward translators independently converted the English version into Malayalam versions. The translators were advised to remain faithful to the concepts, rather than words or literal equivalence.

- Thereafter the two forward translations were reconciled into a single Malayalam version by the in-country investigator.

Phase 2 – Back translation

- Two translators created independent back translations of the Malayalam version to English. They had no access to the original English version.

- The original version and the re-created English version were diligently compared to ensure there was no loss or misrepresentation.

Phase 3- Pilot testing

- The Malayalam version thus created was formatted into the layout of the original English version. This was pilot tested on five patients recruited from the out-patient unit of Institute for Mind and Brain, (Inmind Hospital) a mental health establishment in Thrissur, Kerala. All these five patients were native speakers of Malayalam language.

- The time taken to complete the questionnaire, the comments on response options, any difficulties with wordings used and any suggestions for modification of wordings were recorded verbatim from each patient and translated into English.

- A pilot testing report was prepared summarizing the five patients' responses and their suggestions.

- The need for any change was discussed among the translation team members to create the final Malayalam version.

Phase 4- Proofreading

- Proofreading was done initially by the investigators and later by an independent translator.

Results

The translation issues and difficulties encountered during each phase of the translation work are described below.

Forward translation

The conceptual translations for the response options 'occasionally', 'sometimes' and 'often' were described to be hard; however, the translators and the person who reconciled the forward translations were satisfied with the translations. These gradations are used with a lack of precision by native speakers of Malayalam; however, we wonder if this imprecision extends beyond Malayalam to English. Translation of 'feeling happy', 'feeling able to trust others' etc. was not easy. Words like '*Thonni*' and '*Anubhavappettu*' in Malayalam were reflecting the concept well though these words in isolation may have different notions. '*Thonni*' would translate literally as 'thought' and '*anubhavappettu*' as 'experienced (passively)' to English. Conceptual translation was considered primary, rather than literal translation of

words, phrases or even sentences. The final version appeared conceptually reflective of the original version.

Backward translation

The backward translations mostly reflected the original ReQoL. Notable was the lack of precision of the gradients between the response options 'occasionally', 'sometimes' and 'often'. This lack of precision appears to be common to English and Malayalam. No further modification was warranted of the reconciled version of forward translation of ReQoL to Malayalam after this review.

Pilot study

The Malayalam version of the ReQol was formatted into the layout of the original English Version. The Malayalam version of ReQoL was given to five patients attending the mental health outpatient clinic at Inmind Hospital, Thrissur, in the state of Kerala, India. Three of them had anxiety spectrum disorders. The other two had bipolar disorder and psychosis, both in remission. The age of the patients varied from 20 to 65. Three patients took less than three minutes to complete the questionnaire. The rest took up to ten minutes. One patient felt the 5th question confusing. The word '*santhosham*' used in 5th question was perceived as extraordinary happiness, rather than just happiness. Another respondent indicated the response options were overlapping from one to another. She commented that 'Yes or No' options would have been simpler.

These responses were discussed amongst the research team. More discrete response options were considered unrealistic and beyond the scope of the work of translation. The unexpected response towards the fifth question by a respondent was not considered to be an imperfect translation, but it reflected the patient's learned response to questions about his mood.

Proofreading

The Malayalam version was proof-read by the investigators initially and later by an independent translator. This process did not generate any amendments.

Discussion

It is always helpful to have assessment scales in the language used by patients. There was a need for QOL scales in Malayalam for patients with mental illness. ReQoL in Malayalam will help in bridging this gap. Considering that it is available in other Indian languages and English,[2-6] it will be easy to compare the findings related to QOL status of patients in similar studies conducted in different places.

Conclusion

The translation team was satisfied that the Malayalam version reflects the parent questionnaire (ReQoL) in its entirety and meaningfulness. It is hoped that further community based validation and ongoing use will strengthen its base further.

Acknowledgement

Author information: Aloka Joy, MD, DNB; Consultant Psychiatrist, Institute for Mind and Brain, Minalur, Kuranchery, Thrissur, 680581, Kerala, India, Email: draloka.psy@gmail.com**; Vasudevan V T Namboodiri,** MD, MRCPsych; Consultant Psychiatrist, Institute for Mind and Brain, Minalur P.O, Kuranchery, Thrissur, 680581, Kerala, India, Email: vasudevan.namboodiri@gmail.com; **Manoj Therayil Kumar,** MD, MPH, DNB, Dip CBT (Oxford), FRCPsych, Honorary Director, Institute for Mind and Brain, Thrissur, Kerala. Consultant Psychiatrist, St. George's Hospital, Stafford, UK; Honorary Senior Lecturer, Keele University, UK, Email: mkumar2@nhs.net**; Nilamadhab Kar,** MD, DNB, DPM, MRCPsych, Consultant Psychiatrist, Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Wolverhampton, UK. Email: n.kar@nhs.net

Correspondence: Aloka Joy, MD, DNB; Consultant Psychiatrist, Institute for Mind and Brain, Minalur, Kuranchery, Thrissur, 680581, Kerala, India, Email: draloka.psy@gmail.com

References

1. Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL) for users of mental health services [Internet]. The University of Sheffield. [cited 2018 May 17]. Available at http://www.reqol.org.uk/p/overview.html

2. Keetharuth AD, Brazier J, ConnellJ, Bjomer JB, Carlton J, Buck ET, et al. Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL): a new generic self-reported outcome measure for use with people experiencing mental health difficulties. Br J Psych 2018; 212(1):42-9.

3. Tharoor H, Gopal S, Kar N. English to Tamil translation and Linguistic validation of Recovering Quality of Life Scale (ReQoL). J Geriatr Care Res 2017; 4(2):55-57.

4. Sethi S, Punia V, Khurana H, Kar N. Translation of Recovering Quality of Life Scale (ReQoL) to Hindi: addressing linguistic issues. J Geriatr Care Res 2018; 5(1):3-5.

5. Kar N, Patra S. Recovering Quality of Life (ReQoL) Scale: translation and linguistic validation in Odia. J Geriatr Care Res 2018; 5(1):9-11.

6. Basavarajappa C, Kar N. Recovering Quality of life (ReQoL)-Kannada version: A report of translation Project. J Geriatr Care Res 2018; 5(1):12-14.

7. Malayalam. [Internet]. Wikipedia [cited 2018 May 27] Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayalam

8. Oxford University. Translation and linguistic validation process. Oxford University innovation Limited. Oxford, UK; 2013.