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Measuring outcomes of community aged care programs in Australia: Challenges, opportunities and the Australian Community Outcomes Measurement ACCOM tool

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Measuring health and wellbeing outcomes of community aged care programs is a complex task given the diverse settings in which care takes place and the intersection of numerous factors affecting an individual's quality of life outcomes. Knowledge of a strong causal relationship between services provided and the final outcome enables confidence in assuming the care provided was largely responsible for the outcome achieved. The Department of Health has recently reported on the findings of The National Aged Care Quality Indicator Program - Home Care Pilot. The Program sought to test various tools to measure quality of life outcomes of their community aged care programs. Some of the key issues raised in the study reiterate the findings from The Australian Community Care Outcome Measurement (ACCOM) pilot study, including the value of using the ASCOT SCT4 tool to measure social care related quality of life (SCRQoL) in community aged care programs in the Australian context, and the relevance of collecting additional data to identify potential links of health and demographic characteristics on quality of life scores. This paper will analyse some of the lessons learnt from the Home Care Pilot project and the ACCOM study and make some recommendations around the design, implementation and administration of measurement tools for the purpose of measuring outcomes of community aged care programs in Australia.

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