
READAPT is an instrument which purports to evaluate services for people with learning disabilities and is intended to be used by neither the purchasers nor the providers of services to this group. It consists of two scales: the evaluation of care scale, which is used to assess the care of 10 clients and asks an independent observer to ask clients or their advocates about whether a range of aspects of care (plan of care, goals for elimination, goals for recreation, etc) have been provided, and the organisation scale, which asks the independent observer to find out whether the service has policies and procedures for everything that a good service should have – for example, dealing with client’s possessions, confidentiality, information, and staff development. The responses to all questions on the extensive scales are recorded as yes, no, or not applicable. The package’s brief user friendly guide to the scales, a copy of the two scales, and easy to use software (two disks). All the materials are well presented and clear.

To evaluate the instrument we asked five people (from a variety of professional backgrounds) heavily involved in learning disability services to assess the scales’ strengths and weaknesses and tell us if they would buy it. All in this small, and perhaps unrepresentative, sample completed the task, but none expressed an interest in using or purchasing the scales. Why is this you might ask?

The brief and easy to read introduction provides the first clue. The scales seem to emerge from nowhere, in that there is no analysis of how the items were derived, what the underlying values and principles are, nor the choice of items or an account of the process of the scales’ construction. There was no presentation of whether validity had been considered, nor any relevant data. The reliability of the scale was not discussed. The instructions were very simple for both scales, but no guidance was provided about the complications that would almost certainly arise from asking the important, but simplistic, questions. All our assessors thought that the scale had high face validity, in that it covered a good range of significant variables, but that it was somewhat superficial and likely to prove unreliable.

Several other significant weaknesses were evident. The instrument is very institutionally orientated, with its emphasis on policies, procedures, and documentation. Many very good community services would score badly on the scales and even offer a high quality service to clients. Further, there is very little concession to different types and levels of disability and the instrument is disproportionately focused on clients’ externalities and inappropriateness rather than their needs. Finally, certain sub-scales such as “dignity” seemed to be assessed rather curiously, being determined by whether you had multiple changes of your own clothes and whether you had access to a hairdresser. Although this review is fairly critical, the scale undoubtedly has its strengths, which include the motivation of the authors, the extensive range of issues covered by the scales, and the comprehensiveness of the way they assess services’ documentation, policies, and procedures. Unfortunately, in the final analysis, its obvious weaknesses and little documented evidence about its reliability, validity, and usefulness make us unable to recommend READAPT.

TORY LAVENDER
Director, Clinical Psychology Training Scheme
RICHARD PEMBERTON
Consultant Clinical Psychologist

LEARNING TOOLS

Moving to Audit: An Education Package for Nurses, Midwives, and Health Visitors, Centre for Medical Education, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Dundee, Distance learning package: £29.00 (course enrolment); £1.40 (source book only) (free to practitioners in Scotland). Dundee: University of Dundee, 1994. ISBN 1 871749 42 10 (Available from postgraduate office).

This Moving to Audit educational package developed as a distance learning programme at the Centre for Medical Education at the University of Dundee, in collaboration with the Clinical Resource and Audit Group for Scotland.

The package contains a standalone resource book and a set of challenges and audit activities presented in diary format and simulating everyday practice. Registered practitioners at all levels of knowledge and experience of audit are invited to enrol, and on completion of the six challenges and activities a certificate is awarded, with the possibility of future accreditation for prior learning. Individualised feedback is provided by computer, and there is the opportunity to compare and exchange audit experiences with other course participants.

The resource book is lively, interesting, and easy to read. The twelve chapters are divided into three sections: part one describes the concept of audit and how to set up an audit; part two explains data collection and analysis and interpreting results; and the final part looks at continuing the audit cycle. The reader is guided in the text by helpful subheadings and symbols that highlight key areas for reflection or suggestions for further activity. A comprehensive glossary describes key terminology and there is a wide range of references and suggested further reading.

The chapters dealing with data collection; sampling techniques; practical advice in designing audit tools, data