INTERRAI

INTERNATIONAL RESIDENT ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

WHAT IS IT AND HOW MIGHT I BENEFIT?

Background

Simply, InterRAI is a group of people who came together to improve the care of older persons. Commencing in the 1980's in the USA, this not for profit group now includes professionals from a variety of backgrounds including gerontologists, nurses, researchers, social scientists, physiotherapists and others. Spreading across the globe, InterRAI is used in many countries in many ways, such as the mandated tool for use in all nursing homes in the USA and the optional system for assessment, care planning and quality measurement in Finland. Implementation of this system has occurred in small stand alone facilities of 30 places to country wide adoption such as in North America and many European countries. The application and benefits of InterRAI are diverse as we'll see throughout this and future articles. An exploration of the InterRAI website/s at www.interrai.org and www.interrai-au.org is also a great place to seek and understand.

As a system which continually reviews and improves, InterRAI has extended to promote evidence-based clinical practice and policy decisions through the collection and interpretation of high quality data about the characteristics and outcomes of persons served across a variety of health and social services settings. Now there are assessment instruments for the elderly in a variety of settings e.g. home and community care, assisted living, long term care, and acute care. Assessments for mental health, intellectual disability, and palliative care have also been developed with screening tools also emerging e.g. an emergency screener for psychiatry. This means that a common language can exist across sectors and provide a basis for an integrated health information system.

New Zealand experience

To date the InterRAI story in New Zealand looks briefly like this:
- New Zealand's Ministry of Health has adopted the Contact Assessment and/or Home Care instruments with the District Health Boards using the assessments primarily for people over 65 years who require needs assessment for access to long term publicly funded services in the home or for residential care.
- In the residential care sector, the 2008-09 trial conducted in cooperation with Healthcare Providers New Zealand, RAIsoft, Bay of Plenty DHB and Waitemata DHB (as published in 'Excellence in care. June 2009'; as

presented at HCPNZ 2009 'The evolution of care – bridging the gaps' conference) recommended using the Long Term Care tool for residential care services. We await further information re how this project will move forward.

Validity

All assessments and components of the InterRAI system are rigorously researched and tested providing the user with confidence in results. So whether you utilise outcome data for care planning, quality management or resource planning, you can be sure results are valid and reliable. There is an extensive bibliography on the InterRAI website which is worth a browse.

Components of InterRAI

Elements of the suite of tools include:
- A holistic minimum dataset assessment (MDS) instrument from which the following are automatically generated:
  - Individual performance scores which for home care include cognition, activities of daily living, depression, pain and body mass index.
  - Care assessment protocols (CAPs) that highlight a range of possible risks, strengths and care needs for a person e.g. falls risk, delirium, nutritional status, pressure ulcer, rehabilitation potential etc.
  - Quality indicators including injuries, falls, use of >nine medications, weight loss, urinary tract infections and others.
  - The RUG (Resource Utilisation Group) scale for each person, which is a weighted dependency grouping and score used for human resource management, funding and benchmarking.

- Detailed 'how to' manuals are written to guide completion of the MDS supporting consistency and accuracy.
- The CAPs manual provides assistance in care planning and using results to improve care.
- InterRAI is more recently producing quality of life surveys so that the important subjective view and experience of clients / residents is available to providers.

Benefits

As a user of InterRAI (a nurse manager in long term and community care) I can attest to the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. It supports a risk management approach, restorative care, continuous improvement, evidence based practice, benchmarking and planning across all levels of an organisation. It supports staff and management to do their jobs better, such as:

- The registered nurse / service coordinator can plan care more comprehensively and effectively and easily monitor results for residents.
- It's a great team tool with 'coal-face' staff, medical practitioners and allied health professionals all gaining valuable baseline data and results e.g. all staff appreciate the visual demonstration of care improvements via graphical displays – a boost to morale.
- The facility / service manager has information about resident / client dependency levels, case-mix and quality indicators at their fingertips.
- Providers have all the information they need to manage risk and plan for the future.

The power and impact of this data on better practice is hard to imagine, but it's like a real 'light globe moment' when you move from working frantically in the dark going around in circles to a clear field where the path towards improvement both for an individual and group of persons is as obvious as 'the nose on your face'! The use of the MDS and subsequent information becomes a 'no-brainer'.

Software choices

Of course, you cannot effectively use, manage or benefit from InterRAI without the use of licensed software. InterRAI grants licenses to companies to turn the 'knowledge and instruments' into applications. A successful implementation at your service / facility means you need to select the 'best' software, so consider:
- An easy and user friendly interface / experience which 'enables' staff to perform at their most productive and highest level.
- A product that can integrate with other software you might already be using.
- Which platform is best for the size / shape / staff configuration of your organisation e.g. desktop application, mobile solution?
- Don't underestimate the importance of training for all levels of users – a vital element of any successful implementation.
- Choose an experienced and supportive provider as this investment is not just about now, but rather a journey along a fabulous improvement path!

More information?

Visit the websites, email me.

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