The Dementia Measurement Outcomes Suite (DOMS)

It has been a busy few months since the DOMS project has been revived in August 2015. With this newsletter we aim to inform our Steering Committee Members as well as interested clinicians, researchers, and other stakeholders about our progress.

DOMS or the ‘Dementia Outcomes Measurement Suite’ was initially commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing in 2006 to facilitate a common language for clinicians, researchers, and other professionals assessing people with dementia and their families. In 2010, the final DOMS report was converted into a website: www.dementia-assessment.com.au

DOMS covers eight different domains that can be used to monitor the disease progression, evaluate the effects of interventions or plan services.

For each of these domains, DOMS recommends the two to three best instruments based on a rigorous quality evaluation.

With the 2015/16 DOMS update, we will not only review the current evidence base for included scales, but also move the website to a more user-friendly platform.

Our activities and progress to date

In September, we hosted our first Steering Committee meeting, which provided us with valuable feedback from frontline clinicians and dementia researchers. We took this feedback to the team of web developers at Plural Creative, who are building a new and improved DOMS website as part of a knowledge translation initiative of the Dementia Collaborative Research Centres.

To date, we have completed the systematic update of the assessment scales for the following three DOMS domains: cognitive scales, dementia staging instruments, and functional assessments.

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- Global Dementia Ratings Update
- Functional Assessments Update
- The new traffic lights system
- Development of the new website
- What will 2016 bring?
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Special points of interest:

- The first domains have been updated
- New evidence confirms previous recommendations but also suggests new scales
- The new web-design is currently being finalised as part of a new knowledge translation platform sponsored by:
**Cognitive Scales update**

There have been considerable developments in brief cognitive measures since the original DOMS review. Instruments with sensitivity to mild cognitive impairment and early Alzheimer’s disease are now increasingly popular, with the standout newcomer being the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA). The MoCA is already available in many languages and has been recommended in multiple international guidelines for dementia assessment.

A number of reviews have shown that the Addenbrooke Cognitive Examination (ACE-R/ACE-III) is more sensitive and specific than other screens in detecting different dementia subtypes due to its broader coverage of executive, language, and visuospatial functions.

The General Practitioner Assessment of Cognition (GPCOG) and Mini-Cog maintain their standing in the field of brief screens that are suitable for primary care. Similarly, the Rowland Universal Dementia Assessment Scale (RUDAS) has been confirmed as a reliable and valid screen across a diverse range of cultures.

We have added informant scales to our recommendations to reflect their growing role in dementia assessment. The ubiquitous Informant Questionnaire on Cognitive Decline in the Elderly (IQCQCODE) and the very new and super-fast Ascertain Dementia (AD8) rated equally well as the patient test measures.

**Global dementia ratings update**

The review of global dementia rating scales confirmed the value of two highly popular tools: the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS) and the Clinical Dementia Rating (CDR) scale. In addition, the extremely quick and highly sensitive Dementia Severity Rating Scale (DSRS) maintained its recommended status.

We also added the Functional Assessment Staging Test (FAST), a valid, sensitive, and rapid (only 2 minutes) measure of dementia-related functional decline.

**Functional assessments update**

A wide variety of tests is used to clinically assess the functional impairment of dementia patients. While not all of them are specifically aimed at dementia, we have rated those that have been sufficiently validated in this patient group. As such we continue to recommend “classic” measures of Activities of Daily Living (ADL), such as the Functional Independence Measure (FIM), and Instrumental ADLs such as the Lawton & Brody scale.

The Disability Assessment for Dementia (DAD) scale, a combined ADL/IADL measure, remains the best performing dementia-specific functional assessment scale.

Performance-based measures have been added to our review and recommend the revised Direct Assessment of Functional Status (DAFS-R) due to high quality psychometric evidence in dementia patients.
THE NEW TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

While the DOMS rating is based on a broad set of criteria, the overall score on this rating might not be the only output of interest to health care professionals. When looking for a quick screening tool, for example, the test duration might be a more important parameter. To aid such users in finding the most reliable test for their specific needs, the renewed DOMS website will feature overview tables where all the rated scales are compared per domain, not only in terms of their performance, but also with regard to their user-friendliness, and the time and costs required to perform the test. Via a straightforward colour-coded navigation system, users will be able to quickly determine which test is suited for which situation. A red signal could indicate that the interpretation of the test results requires a lot of preparation and training, or that its administration requires a financial investment. Green signals indicate good test performance, easy administration, and minimal test duration.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW WEBSITE

The new version of the DOMS website entails much more than an update of the assessment scales based on recent research literature. We hope to maximise its potential as an evidence-based dementia assessment toolbox by providing a more intuitive navigation system. Health care professionals and researchers will be able to navigate more easily between the different (types of) tests or search the entire database for a specific test. Each assessment tool is accompanied with a summary, clearly stating its strengths and weaknesses. Where possible, we provide test forms and manuals that can be downloaded. For further reading, we provide the original reference for each test, as well as additional scientific literature on the test performance. Via our traffic light system (see above), it will be easier to compare the advantages and disadvantages of different tests. With all of these measures, we aim to encourage the use of well-validated dementia assessment measures across Australia.
WHAT WILL 2016 BRING?

In the first months of next year, we continue the update of the remaining domains, including quality of life measures, social isolation assessment, and the scaling of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. By the end of May 2016, all the new content will be published online. With the roll out of the updated DOMS website, we reignite the original DOMS effort of streamlining the assessment tools for dementia nationwide. The success of this endeavour will be determined by its use for the health and aged care community. We look forward to all feedback from end users and welcome any suggestions that could improve your experience using the DOMS website.

MEET THE DOMS TEAM

Dr Katrin Seeher will (temporarily) leave the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre as she will be moving to Geneva to work at the World Health Organization. Dr Liesbeth Aerts has joined the DOMS team and will take over Katrin’s responsibilities. Together with Prof Henry Brodaty, Prof Belinda Goodenough and Adam Bentvelzen, the team will continue the DOMS update in 2016.

We would like to thank the DOMS Steering Committee members Dr Lyndal Newton, Dr Sharon Levy, Dr Simone Reppermund, Dr Allan Shell, Julie Strukovski, Kim Burns, Daniella Kanareck, Jacki Wesson and Anne-Nicole Casey for their ongoing support and input.

We also acknowledge the great work of Wil Wylie and his team from Plural Creative in redesigning the DOMS website.

Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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