

Understanding and Interpreting the CORE Outcome Measure (OM)

Introduction

The CORE-OM is a 34-item questionnaire designed to tap into a 'core' of clients' distress in a wide range of psychological therapies service settings. The questions address subjective well-being; commonly experienced problems or symptoms; life and social functioning; and risk to self and others.

The skills addressed in this topic cover:

- how to calculate the total CORE-OM score
- how to place an individual score in a severity band
- how a client's progress is assessed using the concepts of 'clinical' and 'reliable' change

The Skills

(i) *Calculating the total CORE-OM score by hand*

- a. Put the number corresponding to the score for each item in the box provided on the right side of the page on the measure (it will be a number from 0 to 4).
- b. Add all of these numbers together to create the 'total' score.
- c. Divide by the number of items completed (usually 34 if the client has answered all items).
- d. Times by 10 to get the 'clinical' score.
- e. Stages 'c' and 'd' can be simplified by using the look-up table which shows the clinical score derived from each total score (see Figure One on p.3).
- f. (If the questionnaire is completed or entered into CORE Net, the score will be calculated automatically).

(ii) *Identifying the severity band of a CORE-OM score*

- a. The severity bands show where an individual score lies relative to a large database of scores taken in both clinical and non-clinical settings.
- b. The easiest way of seeing how 'severe' a score is, is to look it up on Figure One.
- c. This shows that a score of less than 10 is 'non-clinical'. In other words it is a score that would be similar to someone in a non-clinical sample who is not seeking help for psychological difficulties.
- d. The chart shows the following severity levels: 0-4 = healthy non-clinical; 5-9 = mild non-clinical; 10-14 = mild level; 15-19 = moderate level; 20-24 = moderate-to-severe level; 25-40 = severe level.

(iii) *Clinical Change*

- a. When change is described as 'clinical change' it means simply that a client's score has moved from the 'clinical range' (i.e. a score of 10 or more) into the 'non-clinical range' (i.e. a score of less than 10).
- b. This means that if the client scores 20 at the beginning of therapy and 9 at the end of therapy this would count as 'clinical change'. Likewise if the client scored 10 at the

beginning of therapy and 9 at the end of therapy this would still be 'clinical change' as the client has moved from a clinical score to a non-clinical score (even though they have only improved by one point). If a client scored 40 at the beginning of therapy and then 10 at the end of therapy, although this is a huge difference, it would not count as 'clinical change' because the client still has a clinical score.

(iv) *Reliable Change*

- a. This is change which is considered to be due to something other than a random fluctuation of scores.
- b. There are various ways of calculating a 'reliable change' using statistics. However, in the CORE measure a change of five points or more is considered 'reliable'. In other words if your client improves by five or more points it is likely that there has been some kind of meaningful improvement in their wellbeing.
- c. This means that if a client starts with a score of 10 and ends with a score of 8, this would not be reliable change because the change only consists of two points difference (although it would be 'clinical change'). However a change from 8 to 3 or a change from 17 to 11 would be.
- d. A reliable change for the worse (e.g. a change from 10 to 15) is considered a 'reliable deterioration'.

Summary: Key Learning Points

1. The total CORE OM score can be calculated by adding up the scores for each question (the 'total score'), dividing by the number of questions completed (34 if all are completed) and multiplying by 10. Alternatively, the total score can be used to look up the clinical score on the look-up table.
2. The severity of a CORE OM score can be determined by consulting the severity levels on the look up table.
3. Clinical change is the move from a clinical level score (i.e. one of 10 or above) to a non-clinical level score (i.e. one of below 10).
4. Reliable change is enough change for us to be reasonably confident that the change is not due to random variations associated with repeated measurements. For CORE-OM a change of five or more points on the clinical score is considered 'reliable'.

Figure One: Look up table of CORE-OM scores and severity levels

Non-clinical range				Clinical range									
Total score	Clinical Score	Simple score	Severity Level	Mild, Moderate, Moderate-to-severe				Severe					
				Total score	Clinical Score	Simple score	Severity Level	Total score	Clinical Score	Simple score	Severity Level		
1	0.3	0	Healthy	Clinical cut-off level				85	25.0	25	Severe level		
2	0.6			34	10.0	10	Mild level	86	25.3				
3	0.9			35	10.3			87	25.6				
4	1.2	36		10.6	88			25.9					
5	1.5	11		37	10.9			89	26.2	26			
6	1.8			38	11.2			90	26.5				
7	2.1	12		39	11.5			91	26.8	27			
8	2.4			40	11.8	92		27.1					
9	2.6			41	12.1	93		27.4					
10	2.9	13		42	12.4	94		27.6	28				
11	3.2			43	12.6	95		27.9					
12	3.5			44	12.9	96		28.2					
13	3.8	14		45	13.2	97		28.5	29				
14	4.1			46	13.5	98		28.8					
15	4.4			47	13.8	99		29.1					
16	4.7	15	48	14.1	100	29.4		30					
17	5.0		49	14.4	101	29.7							
18	5.3		50	14.7	102	30.0							
19	5.6	16	51	15.0	103	30.3	31						
20	5.9		52	15.3	104	30.6							
21	6.2		53	15.6	105	30.9							
22	6.5	17	54	15.9	106	31.2	32						
23	6.8		55	16.2	107	31.5							
24	7.1		56	16.5	108	31.8							
25	7.4	18	57	16.8	109	32.1	33						
26	7.6		58	17.1	110	32.4							
27	7.9		59	17.4	111	32.6							
28	8.2	19	60	17.6	112	32.9	34						
29	8.5		61	17.9	113	33.2							
30	8.8		62	18.2	114	33.5							
31	9.1	20	63	18.5	115	33.8	35						
32	9.4		64	18.8	116	34.1							
33	9.7		65	19.1	117	34.4							
<p>Guidance notes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The original mean item score can be readily calculated by dividing the clinical score by 10. The 'simple' score uses the first integer only of the clinical score as a rough guide. The reliable change index is 5 points and the cut-off level is a clinical score of 10 (or .5 and 1 respectively if using the traditional scoring method). 				66	19.4	21	Moderate-to-severe level	118	34.7	36			
				67	19.7			68	20.0			119	35.0
				69	20.3			70	20.6			120	35.3
				71	20.9	22		72	21.2	121		35.6	37
				73	21.5			73	21.5	122		35.9	
				74	21.8			74	21.8	123		36.2	
				75	22.1	23		75	22.1	124		36.5	38
				76	22.4			76	22.4	125	36.8		
				77	22.6			77	22.6	126	37.1		
				78	22.9	24		78	22.9	127	37.4	39	
				79	23.2			79	23.2	128	37.6		
				80	23.5			80	23.5	129	37.9		
81	23.8	24	81	23.8	130	38.2	40						
82	24.1		82	24.1	131	38.5							
83	24.4		83	24.4	132	38.8							
84	24.7		84	24.7	133	39.1							
						85	25.0						
						86	25.3						
						87	25.6						
						88	25.9						
						89	26.2						
						90	26.5						
						91	26.8						
						92	27.1						
						93	27.4						
						94	27.6						
						95	27.9						
						96	28.2						
						97	28.5						
						98	28.8						
						99	29.1						
						100	29.4						
						101	29.7						
						102	30.0						
						103	30.3						
						104	30.6						
						105	30.9						
						106	31.2						
						107	31.5						
						108	31.8						
						109	32.1						
						110	32.4						
						111	32.6						
						112	32.9						
						113	33.2						
						114	33.5						
						115	33.8						
						116	34.1						
						117	34.4						
						118	34.7						
						119	35.0						
						120	35.3						
						121	35.6						
						122	35.9						
						123	36.2						
						124	36.5						
						125	36.8						
						126	37.1						
						127	37.4						
						128	37.6						
						129	37.9						
						130	38.2						
						131	38.5						
						132	38.8						
						133	39.1						
						134	39.4						
						135	39.7						
						136	40.0						

Competence Quiz

1. Calculate the clinical score of a CORE-OM where the total score is 33 and the client failed to answer one question?
2. How severe is a score of 22?
3. What is the difference between clinical and reliable change?
4. What kind of change is it:
 - a. If a client moves from an initial score of 12 to a final score of 7?
 - b. If a client moves from an initial score of 11 to a final score of 9?
 - c. If a client moves from an initial score of 28 to a final score of 14?