Palliative Care Patients' Perspectives of a French Translation of the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System Revised (ESAS-r)

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Aims: The Edmonton Symptom Assessment System Revised (ESAS-r) is a nine-item self-report symptom intensity tool developed for palliative care patients, with the option of adding a 10th patient-specific symptom. Each symptom is rated on a scale from 0 (none or best possible) to 10 (worst possible). Due to growing international uptake, the ESAS-r has been translated into different languages. However, there has not been any agreement regarding a single standard process for translation into multiple languages, which also include patients' perspectives. The purpose of this study was to obtain palliative care patients' perspectives regarding a French translation of the ESAS-r.
Methods: We developed a French version of the ESAS-r, using a standard translation method, involving both professional translators and bilingual palliative care experts. Fifteen francophone-speaking palliative care patients were recruited from acute care, cancer care and tertiary palliative care sites in two urban centres in Canada. Participants completed the ESAS-r and then reviewed the tool to identify any problems associated with the translation, in the presence of a trained interviewer. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.
Results: Most participants were cancer patients (n=14, 93%), with an average age of 72 years (range: 34-83). The two highest rated symptoms were tiredness (Mean=4.8, SD 2.3) and well-being (Mean=4.2, SD 2.8). Based on participants' concerns, translations for four of the nine symptoms were revised: drowsiness, nausea, lack of appetite and shortness of breath. Concerns expressed for three additional symptoms (depression, anxiety, well-being) were related to overall difficulty rating these symptoms, not specific to the translation. There were no concerns expressed for pain and tiredness.
Conclusion: The findings from this study provide a vital step in the development of a standardized translation protocol, including patient perspectives, which can be applied to other languages.

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