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

Ann Huot1, Valérie Gratton2, Crystal Beaumont3, Shirley H. Bush4, Salomon Fotsing2, Yoko Tarumi5, Sharon Watanabe1,6, & Cheryl Nekolaichuk3,6

1Cross Cancer Institute, Edmonton
2Montfort Hospital, Ottawa and Division of Palliative Care, Department of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Ottawa
3Grey Nuns Hospital, Covenant Health, Edmonton
4Élisabeth Bruyère Hospital, Ottawa and Division of Palliative Care, Department of Medicine, University of Ottawa and Bruyère Research Institute, Ottawa
5Royal Alexandra Hospital, Edmonton
6Division of Palliative Care Medicine, Department of Oncology, University of Alberta.

Edmonton

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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