

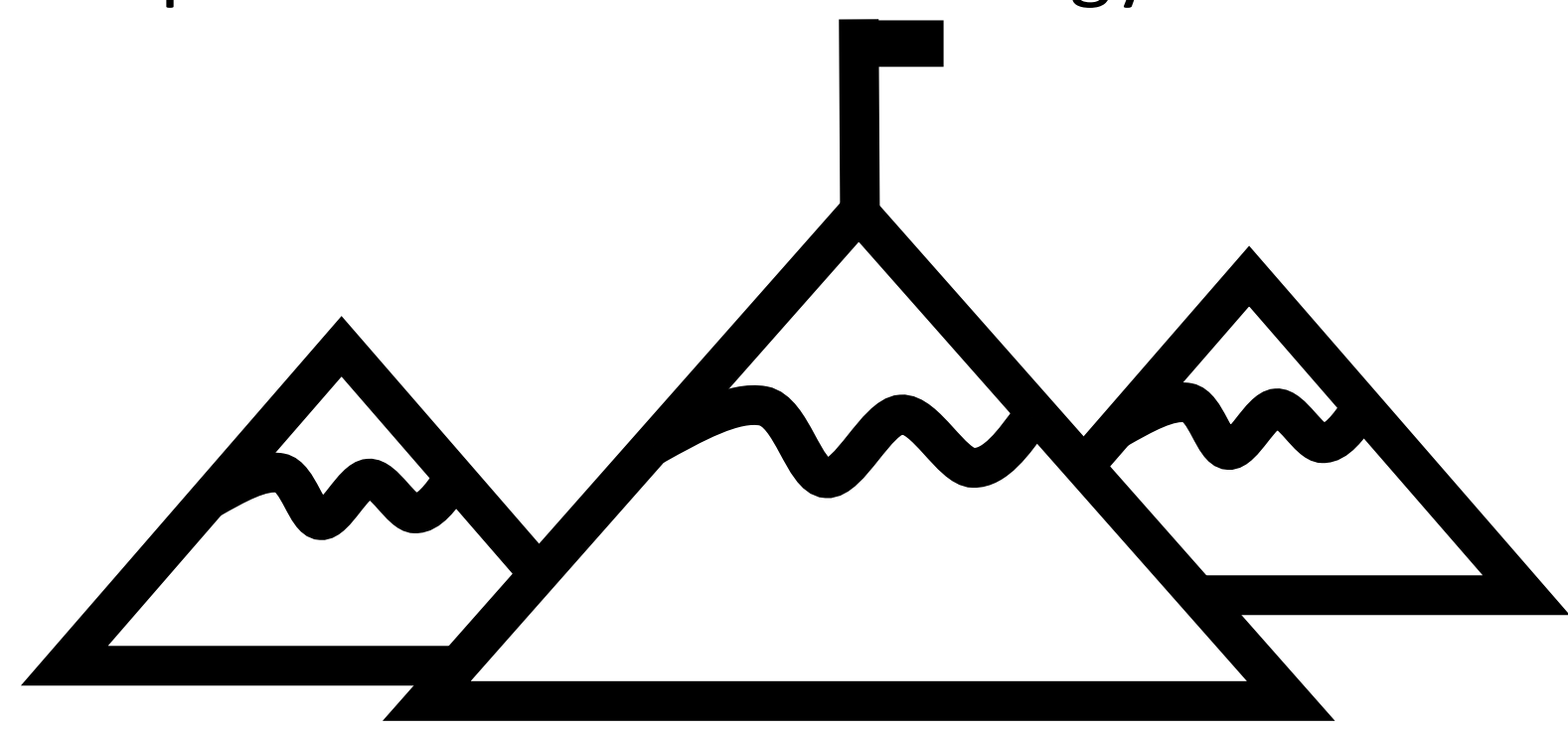
Patients and clinicians' views on the most important outcome measure concepts for first point of contact audiology clinics in Wales: a semi-structured interview approach (LISTEN)

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BACKGROUND

The way in which audiology services are delivered in Wales is changing. In future, patients with ear related problems will access First Point of Contact (FPoC) audiology services and initially be seen by an audiologist rather than a GP. This will give patients access to specialised services sooner. To make sure NHS services improve health it is important to collect data on how well a service is performing. Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) are questionnaires that ask about a patients' health and can be used to evaluate services.¹ Being a new service, there are currently no PROMs available to monitor how FPoC audiology services are performing. Before designing a new PROM it is prudent to first explore whether any pre-existing questionnaires can be used.² In order to identify appropriate PROMs for consideration, we must clearly define what a FPoC audiology PROM should measure.³ It is also essential to include service users in every stage of the development of any PROM. Involving patients aligns with the principles of patient-centred care and ensures patients have PROMs with outcome measures that are meaningful to them.¹ This research project aims to address this problem by interviewing patients and clinicians with experience of FPoC audiology services.



Objectives

OVERARCHING AIM: To develop an all Wales PROM for the evaluation of FPoC audiology services

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE: To explore and understand the outcome measure themes / concepts of importance to patients attending FPoC audiology clinics

PRIMARY ENDPOINT: National agreement across Wales on what a FPoC audiology PROMs questionnaire should measure.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study will be undertaken using a qualitative descriptive approach, by conducting semi-structured interviews remotely. Participants will represent three key stakeholder groups;

Service users - $6 \leq X \leq 12$

Patients accessing FPoC audiology services at Swansea Bay UHB, Powys THB and Betsi Cadwaladr UHB will represent service users for this project.

Audiologists - $X \leq 18$

Audiology staff with experience of providing and/or piloting FPoC audiology service in Wales will be considered for this project.

GP cluster leads - $X \leq 6$

Those with experience of providing and/or piloting FPoC audiology services that offer hearing assessments and wax removal.

Participants will be individually interviewed once and transcripts analysed for emerging themes using thematic analysis. Interviews are expected to last 30-45 minutes.

Patient and Public Involvement

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) recruitment commenced in November 2023 by reaching out to the Swansea Hard of Hearing Group, a patient-organised voluntary association. One individual volunteered to become a PPI member for this project. Due to the timing of their involvement, the PPI member was unable to participate in selecting the research topic or question. However, they expressed verbal support for the project's significance during the initial meeting.

To date, the PPI member has reviewed the project protocol providing feedback on the use of lay language, withdrawal procedures, and the overall study design. PPI engagement will continue at key stages of the project their continued participation is expected to enhance project management, analysis, reporting, and dissemination.

Ethics and dissemination

The LISTEN study received approval from the Health Research Authority and Health and Care Research Wales on 19 August 2024 (24/EM/0158 – 337093). Recruitment is due to begin in November 2024. Study findings will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

DISCUSSION

This study offers a unique opportunity to understand the hearing health needs of the Welsh adult population and their expectations when accessing FPoC audiology services. The findings obtained will inform a literature review adhering to the COSMIN-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement Instruments (COSMIN) guidelines. This literature review will assess whether any pre-existing questionnaires are suitable for evaluating FPoC audiology services or if there is a need to create a new instrument specifically for this purpose.³ The outcomes of the COSMIN literature review will lay the groundwork for a doctoral level fellowship aimed at continuing the development of an all Wales PROM for FPoC audiology services. That is, either designing and validating a new instrument, or validating a pre-existing instrument (with likely modification) for this purpose.

References

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2. Streiner, D. L., Norman, G. R., & Cairney, J. (2015). *Health measurement scales a practical guide to their development and use.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
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