The Wellness Thermometer: healthcare professionals’ experiences of using the tool in practice

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Background

Treatment and management of patients with HIV has evolved enormously over the previous few decades, from caring for patients with an infectious disease and poor prognosis, to long-term chronic disease management. Present day HIV care embraces more than the achievement of undetectable viral load.

This includes monitoring patients’ wellbeing and quality of life as these can impact adherence to therapy. Effective communication between patients and health care professionals (HCP) is essential and all efforts should be made to overcome any communication barriers that exist. Here we report HCPs’ experience with the Wellness Thermometer – a tool to facilitate patient-HCP communication.

Methods

The Wellness Thermometer was offered to all patients attending three UK HIV clinics over eight weeks. Participating HCPs were invited to complete a short anonymous survey giving their opinion and experience of the Wellness Thermometer. Ratings from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ were collected for the following:

Figure 1. Health Care Professional Engagement Survey Card & Questions

HCPs were asked to rate the usefulness of patients being able to write down discussion points ahead of the consultation and the ability to record overall wellbeing and specific concerns.

To date, 12 HCPs have evaluated the Wellness Thermometer. Responses are given below:

Q1: Wellness Thermometer helped my patients identify their concerns

Q2: The wellness thermometer improved consultations

Q3: The wellness thermometer was easy to use and understand

Q4: The WT resulted in longer consultations

Q5: I think the wellness thermometer is a useful tool

Q6: I would like to introduce the WT for ALL my patients

Conclusions

HCPs’ experiences of using the Wellness Thermometer were extremely positive. HCPs indicated that the Wellness Thermometer enabled patients’ agendas to shape the consultation and enable better communication of any concerns. We envison that the Wellness Thermometer could become a useful tool for establishing open communication between patients and HCPs.