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**Client Satisfaction at the Midcentral Health and Massey
University Concussion Clinic**

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Abstract

The present study intended to evaluate the quality of the service provided by the Midcentral Health and Massey University Concussion Clinic. In doing so, the study first considered the nature of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and concussion injury and rehabilitation and investigated different methods of measuring quality and weighed up the pros and cons of each method to chose the most appropriate method for this setting. As a result, the present study surveyed service satisfaction at the Concussion Clinic. A standardised measure (the Service Satisfaction Survey – 30) was chosen to counter previous methodological problems common to other studies of satisfaction. The main objective of this study was to provide feedback to the Concussion Clinic regarding satisfaction with aspects of their services and to simultaneously investigate relationships with satisfaction. On a whole, participants were generally satisfied with the Concussion Clinic service; conversely some aspects of the service that could be improved were identified. However caution has to be taken in analysing the results especially when inferring results to the whole population, due to this low response rate (twenty of the seventy-nine clients surveyed returned the survey). The second objective of the study was to evaluate the use of this method of evaluation, and the measure chosen, with this type of service. The measure chosen (the Service Satisfaction Scale –30) proved inappropriate for this service setting due to the length and irrelevant questions. Moreover the use of client satisfaction as a method to evaluate this service, even though it provided some data on satisfaction with services, also may not be justified for the reason that the clients were generally only seen once and the nature of outcome in this setting was unclear. This study demonstrated the need for more research in the area of service satisfaction in the health arena, in particular this type of setting; suggestions for this research are included in this study.

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Overview

The outcomes of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MTBI) are variable – one person could recover in days with no after affects while someone else could suffer a diminished capacity to perform tasks which can even remain up to six months later i.e., post concussion syndrome. Often these effects are masked by other injuries occurring simultaneously. The emphasis on more apparent physical injury often means that it is difficult to understand the diminished capacity along with headaches and mood changes. This can be frustrating for the person with MTBI as they and their family fail to recognise what is causing these changes. Reassurance that what they are experiencing is normal, education about MTBI, and assessment of the nature and extent of difficulties is essential.

In 2000, New Zealand's Accident and Compensation Corporation (ACC) became aware of this need and in 2001 circulated specifications and invited applications for the set up of nationwide concussion clinics. Eventually nine concussion clinics were set up throughout New Zealand. People with MTBI could attend these clinics for an initial neurological and neuropsychological assessment screen; sometimes being referred on to other agencies when necessary for more in depth assessment and intervention.

The ACC funded concussion clinics have been in operation for about a year now and to this point there has no service evaluation. Evaluation of outcome is a natural step for all service providers as they are increasingly becoming accountable to stakeholders, such as policy makers, clients and general public, for ensuring that their current services/methods are helpful. Demonstrations/evidence that a treatment service is effective is necessary to justify further resources and funding, and for the renewal of the contract.

The most obvious form of outcome research would be to compare the outcome of the Concussion Clinic population with a population that has been exposed to the same conditions, but has not been to a concussion clinic. This was not possible as it would have been difficult to locate people not referred. . The purpose of this study then was to evaluate the Concussion Clinic service in terms of clients' satisfaction with aspects of the service. The current study's purpose is also to explore and discuss the use of client satisfaction research in a Concussion Clinic setting, with a particular focus on the measure chosen.

In the present study, satisfaction with service provided by the Midcentral Health and Massey University Concussion Clinic will be examined from the perspective of the client. This follows a model long utilised by business organisations, i.e., 'the customer is always right'. Increasingly in health organisations, providers are shifting towards the view that client satisfaction is a measure of success. This shift is due to consumers increasing involvement in advocating for services that are helpful and meet their needs.

Investigating client satisfaction at the Concussion Clinic would allow the providers to see whether their service is working, to understand which aspects of their programme are valued, which need improving and which do not work at all. It would measure the quality and effectiveness of care, and guide change. Data collected would also be beneficial when used comparatively with future client satisfaction investigations. Client satisfaction studies have proven useful in many health settings, however research of this type has never been conducted in a Concussion Clinic setting.

Chapter 1 sets the reader up with a background to brain injury, the types, cause and effect. It starts off with a general overview of what traumatic brain injury (TBI) is and then discusses, more specifically what concussion and mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) are and the outcomes of these; with an emphasis on post concussion syndrome (PCS). Chapter 2 then goes on to discuss the history of rehabilitation for brain injury and then talks about MTBI rehabilitation and later narrowing down to MTBI rehabilitation specific to New Zealand. A brief outline is provided of the part the Accident and Compensation Corporation (ACC) plays in developing MTBI rehabilitation in New Zealand, in particular their proposal for the set-up of Concussion Clinics, and Chapter 2 ends with a description of the research setting, one of the

Concussion Clinics, and the need for evaluation of the service. Chapter 3 highlights the importance and types of outcome evaluation in the health arena, narrowing down to discuss client satisfaction research, what it is, its dimensions and the reservations and rationale for conducting research of this manner Chapter 4 considers service satisfaction in more depth, looking at the relationships of service satisfaction with client variables, and how these may affect the outcome of the study and continues through to chapter 5 where methodological issues are explored and considered. Chapter 6 highlights the rationale for the thesis, outlining the objectives of the thesis and the hypotheses formulated from these. The method for conducting the study is summarized in Chapter 7, along with a description of the research setting, research, participants, measure chosen, and ways that methodological issues and ethical considerations were dealt with. This then leads on to the results section, Chapter 8, where the results are illustrated according to objectives and hypotheses. Chapter 9 is a discussion of the results pertaining to objectives and hypothesis and outlines some ideas for future research.