INTERMEZZO

ONCOQUEST: A TOUCH-SCREEN COMPUTER ASSISTED SYSTEM TO MONITOR HEALTH RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE VIA PATIENT REPORTED OUTCOME MEASURES
In 2006, the Department of Otolaryngology- Head & Neck Surgery of VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam started to develop OncoQuest, a touch-screen computer assisted system to monitor health related quality of life via patient reported outcome measures (PROMs) in head and neck cancer patients during follow-up care.

In OncoQuest a patient can monitor his or her health related quality of life (HRQOL) via the EORTC QLQ-C30 and QLQ-HN35 questionnaires and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). The EORTC-QLQ-C30 is a cancer-specific questionnaire focused on quality of life\(^1\), the EORTC-QLQ-HN35 module covers specific issues on HNC\(^2\). The HADS is a self-assessment scale for measuring distress (total HADS score) with two subscales, anxiety (HADS-A) and depression (HADS-D)\(^3\). The HADS was specifically designed for use in the medically ill.

OncoQuest is organized in three modules: 1) the central database in which the patient’s response data are held, archived and organized, 2) the patient response unit which is controlled via touch screen, and 3) analysis and graphical display of the patient’s responses.

To log into the system, a patient is asked for his or her hospital identification number, which is checked against the hospital patient information system for confirmation. A patient then gets the questions in OncoQuest presented in full screen mode, in which one question at a time is shown. All questions are multiple choice and mandatory to answer in order to continue to the next question. The next question is automatically displayed once the previous question is answered. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of an OncoQuest question (in Dutch).

After a patient has completed all questions, the results of the subscales of the questionnaires are shown in clear graphics on the computer screen (see figure 2&3), by means of a stand-alone application (OncoQuest viewer), which is linked to the hospital information system. Via this system, the physician of the patient can also view the results.

From 2008 onwards, all HNC patients who are treated with curative intent are invited to use OncoQuest during their regular follow-up visit to the outpatient clinic. The usage of OncoQuest is on a voluntary basis. OncoQuest is available at the outpatient
clinic in a separate consultation room with dedicated touch screen computers. If patients need help when using OncoQuest, assistance is available. When a patient has completed all questions in OncoQuest, he or she can choose to discuss the results with a consulting oncology nurse. The nurse can identify and support patients that have problems regarding their HRQOL and/or experience psychological distress. During this consultation, the nurse provides information and advice, and, if needed, supportive care options are discussed.

Figure 1. Screenshot of an OncoQuest question

Figure 2. Screenshot of graphical display of results in OncoQuest
Figure 3. Screenshot of the graphical display of multiple measurements of OncoQuest
REFERENCES

