**Title:** Implementing routine outcome measurement in an acute mental health unit within rural South Africa.

**Abstract:**

**Introduction**: The increasing emphasis on routine outcome measurement has urged healthcare practitioners to demonstrate the impact of their interventions in mental health care settings. This study implemented routine outcome measurement in a rural hospital with an acute mental health unit and measured change in activity participation of mental health care users attending an occupational therapy programme.

**Methods**: A one group pre/post-test design was used. The Activity Participation Outcome Measure was administered to measure activity participation of 64 mental health care users. Five measurements were done between admission and follow-up after discharge.

**Results:** Majority of the participants were between the ages of 20 – 29 and mainly diagnosed with substance use disorders. The effect sizes, Cohen’s d (> 0.80) and Cohen’s r (>0.37) demonstrated a significant positive change (*p*=0.00) across all APOM domains during hospitalisation. An insignificant change (*p*> 0.005) was noted in the effect sizes during the follow-up stages with a substantial decline in some of the APOM domains indicating that patients were not well-integrated into their communities.

**Conclusion:** This study revealed the importance of routine outcome measurement in shaping clinical practice to ensure meaningful intervention and successful integration of MHCUs in their communities.

**KEY WORDS:**

Routine outcome measurement, activity participation, occupational therapy, mental health, rural context.