



**Title** A Systematic Review of Outcome Measures Used in Forensic Mental Health Research with Consensus Panel Opinion

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## Aim

To use a structured review and a consensus panel to describe and assess outcome measures in forensic mental health research.

## Conclusions and results

A wide range of domains are relevant in assessing outcomes of interventions in forensic mental health services. Evaluations need to consider public safety, but also clinical, rehabilitation, and humanitarian outcomes. Recidivism is a high priority; the public expects interventions that will reduce future criminal behavior. Greater attention must be given to validity of measurement, given the variety of approaches to measurement. More research is needed on methods to take account of the heterogeneity of seriousness of forms of recidivism in outcome measurement. Validity of self-report instruments regarding recidivism also needs further study. Mental health is an important dimension of outcome. The review provides support for the view that domains such as quality of life, social function, and psychosocial adjustment have not been extensively employed in forensic mental health research, but are relevant and important. The role of such instruments needs greater consideration. The final sample of eligible studies for inclusion in the review consisted of 308 separate studies obtained from 302 references. The consensus group agreed on 11 domains of forensic mental health outcome measurement, all of which were considered important. Nine different outcome measure instruments were used in more than 4 different studies. The most frequently used outcome measure was used in 15 studies. The consensus group found that many domains beyond recidivism and mental health were important, but under-represented in the review of outcomes. Current instruments that may show future promise in outcome measurement included risk assessment tools. The outcome measure of repeat offending behavior was the most frequently used, occurring in 72% of the studies included in the review. Its measurement varied with position in the criminal justice system, offence specification, and measurement

method. The consensus group believed that recidivism is only an indication of the amount of antisocial acts that are committed.

## Recommendations

Evaluations need to take account of public safety, but also clinical, rehabilitation, and humanitarian outcomes. Recidivism is a high priority; the public expects interventions that will reduce future criminal behavior. Greater attention needs to be given to validity of measurement, given the variety of approaches to measurement. More research is needed on methods to take account of the heterogeneity of seriousness of forms of recidivism in outcome measurement. Further research is needed on validity of self-report instruments regarding recidivism.

## Methods

See Executive Summary link [www.hta.ac.uk/project/1583.asp](http://www.hta.ac.uk/project/1583.asp).

## Further research/reviews required

See Executive Summary link [www.hta.ac.uk/project/1583.asp](http://www.hta.ac.uk/project/1583.asp).